

Adopted resolution

on better fishing deals for Africa

In light of the EU's abject failure to regulate our own local fish stocks, the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP) calls on EU Fisheries Ministers to give the European Commission an immediate mandate to implement EFGP plans for improving fishing agreements with developing countries in order to prevent any further damage to these fragile ecosystems and resources. If a watertight sustainable solution cannot be found, we advocate withdrawal from ALL such agreements until such time as we can regulate our own fish stocks before plundering those in the rest of the world.

As a direct result of the failure of the Common Fisheries Policy, stocks continue to decrease here in Europe and EU ship owners and fish processors are looking further afield for fish to supply the market. To exploit these other resources, the EU has drawn up fisheries agreements (1) with many third countries which now constitute an increasingly important component of the EU's fisheries policy. Figures are difficult to come by, but well over half of the fish consumed in the EU comes from non-EU waters.

The EFGP are not opposed to EU bilateral fisheries agreements. If the EU did not negotiate them, then EU ship owners would negotiate their own private arrangements with third country governments and the result would be an absolute lack of transparency - no information on the terms of the agreement, the stocks being fished, the money being paid, the impact on the resource. EU bilateral agreements are at least open to scrutiny and to pressure for their improvement. The key, as always, is sustainability, whether it involves EU boats directly exploiting local resources to sell on the European market or by providing local employment and selling the fish locally (2).

We wish to improve the negotiation, implementation and administration of the agreements (3) so that they contribute to the sustainable fishing in the waters of third countries, and continue to provide both food and employment to local fishing communities - carefully regulated fishing by EU interests should only be allowed after their needs are ensured.

The most recent Green examination of an agreement was the McKenna report on Guinea (A5-0164/2004). While the report was extremely critical of the agreement, there were several improvements over previous protocols and it finally received Green support qualified by a critical report. The approach of the Green Group to future agreements should depend on the specific terms of each proposal.

We are very concerned that some member states wish to see a big expansion of EU fishing in the waters of developing countries and ask that:

1. No new or renewed access agreements should be made without an Environmental and Sustainability Impact Assessment which should then be scrupulously followed.
2. The EU must always follow the precautionary approach, meaning that scientific data must be available to assess the status of stocks prior to the negotiation of an agreement

3. New or renewed fishing agreements should not lead to over fishing, over capacity or ecosystem destruction in the region
4. Priority access to stocks must always be granted to the small-scale fishing industry of the third country rather than to the EU which should be encouraged to help third countries and local communities to build up a local and sustainable fishery
5. Since fish do not recognise national boundaries we urge negotiation of fisheries agreements on a regional basis and urge the EU to assist partner countries to develop national, or regional, fisheries policy and management plans that include the ecosystem as a whole, not just individual commercial stocks
6. We stress the need for coherence between policies towards and between third countries, in particular environmental and development policy with all coastal states in whose waters the stocks occur, and preferably within the context of regional fisheries management organizations.
7. The EU must support and assist in the development and implementation of an effective surveillance and monitoring programme in the developing countries' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).
 "The fishing area next to the former Spanish Sahara and to the Canary Islands have a rich biological biodiversity. This biodiversity is also very fragile and the fishing potential is practically plundered and about to disappear for ever. That is why we should implement any protection measure to prevent it from external aggression like oil drills or prospections which are being held in these waters under the coverage of Spain and Morocco. This drills use active sonars which have been under suspect by resolution of the European Parliament (28 Oct. 2004).

Los Verdes. Partido Verde Europeo ask for a special regulation, which could forbid the drills in the waters surrounding the Canary Islands and the former Spanish Sahara because they have been declared as waters specially protected by international institutions."

8. A clear separation needs to be made between compensation paid for access to fishery resources, and funds provided for targeted measures. The latter should be budgeted in a way that allows the Community to verify that the money is indeed used to reach the agreed objective

Notes:

(1) At present, there are 17 such agreements mostly with African countries with both Atlantic and Indian coasts. They range in cost from €86 million per year for Mauritania to €350.000 for Comoros, and total €141 million per year. Some of these agreements are exclusively for tuna, some for other species such as shrimp, squid or demersal species, and some are mixed agreements (tuna and other species). The main beneficiary of access agreements with developing countries is Spain, followed by France. Lesser beneficiaries include Portugal, Italy, Greece, the UK and Ireland.

(2) Accumulating evidence suggests that virtually all of these fisheries are being willfully and often criminally over exploited by industrial scale fishing by boats from the EU and other areas such as Japan. All of the agreements contribute to over-fishing, represent unfair competition to local fishermen, do not offer a fair price to developing countries, and are in conflict with EU development policies. Ironically, the situation is so bad in some countries that the over exploitation of their coastal fisheries has lead to a landward migration and an unwelcome increase in the bush meat trade including the hunting of particularly precious species, such as some primates. In

addition, some countries such as Morocco have decided that the EU cannot be trusted and have voluntarily withdrawn, from fishing agreements, while others such as Angola and Senegal are threatening to withdraw in an attempt to save their own seas and natural heritage from complete disaster. Despite all of the financial incentives offered no African country can claim to record a net benefit from any fishing agreement struck with the EU, although some will eagerly grasp at the possibility of short-term gain.

(3) European Greens have been very critical of those agreements which have been made in the past. The first detailed analysis was the McKenna report of 1996 on the Madagascar agreement (A4-0007/1996). The McKenna report highlighted many significant flaws in that agreement:

- lack of international management for tuna in the Indian Ocean;
- insufficient control and enforcement over EU fishing activities;
- no limit on the amount of fishing that could be conducted;
- serious bycatch problems with small tuna and other species;
- little employment generated for Malagasy fishermen.

As a result of this report, it was recommended that Parliament reject the agreement although Parliament did not follow this recommendation.