

Fisheries and Poverty Reduction

European Commission Communication (2000)724

to the Council and the European Parliament

Mr. Nielsen in agreement with Mr. Fischler

Activities related to fisheries and aquaculture and fish in general are important in developing countries. Along the entire value chain, from capture or culture, processing, sale until consumption, developing countries want to seize economic and social value-added. From the perspective of development, the repartition of this value-added between developing and developed countries represents an important issue. The Commission has made poverty reduction the central objective of its development policy. The fisheries sector has significant positive potential to achieve this objective. Other policies of the Community such as the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), trade, consumer protection and environment affect the ultimate outcome as well. This raises the issue of coherence between these different policies and the development objective.

This Communication (COM(2000)724 – final) stresses the importance of the fisheries sector for the societies in developing countries. It provides indications for the design of future development programmes.

It is proposed to adopt specific guidelines in order to target Community interventions in

this development sector and find a balance between:

- European solidarity with developing countries whose populations are vitally dependent on fisheries resources either for consumption or for their economic activities;
- The European Union's commercial interest of continuing to import large quantities of fish from developing countries in order to meet the demand of consumers and of the food industry in Europe;
- The economic and social interest in supporting certain traditional European fishing communities in continuing their fishing activities in distant waters; and
- Environmental concerns, considering oceans and seas as a 'world resource', which is increasingly being regarded as the common heritage of humanity.
- The Communication is structured in several sections, which analyse
- Fisheries as part of the development policy of the European Union;

- Commerce of fisheries and aquaculture products in a context of globalisation;
- The sustainability of global fisheries resources as an international concern;
- Guidelines to target the interventions of the European Community.

In the annexes additional material is presented, e.g. excerpts of the Communication 'The Development Policy of the European Community' (COM(2000)212 final) and the grand principles of the international community concerning development in relation to aquatic resources.

Some elements raised in this Communication have major implications for other European policies, in particular the Common Fisheries Policy. These will be dealt with elsewhere. Some of these implications will be taken into account in the Green Paper on the Common Fisheries Policy.

The full text is available on the website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/lex/en/2000/com_2000_724_en.pdf. ■

Council of the European Union Resolution Brussels, 8 November 2001

Introduction

The Council:

1. Welcomes the communication submitted by the Commission entitled "Fisheries and poverty reduction" with the expectation of improving coherence of EU policies regarding fishery, poverty reduction, trade and environment;
2. Recognises the importance of fisheries and aquaculture for the sustainable development of developing countries, their harmonious and gradual integration into the world economy and the fight against poverty;
3. Endorses the Commission's analysis of the fishery sector's contribution to food security

and the need to give priority to the nutritional requirements of local communities;

4. Recognises the macro-economic importance of the fisheries sector for developing countries which draw a significant proportion of their foreign exchange earnings from that sector and emphasises the growing globalisation of trade in fisheries and aquaculture products of which the developing countries are the main exporters;
5. Recognises the contribution to local employment provided by the fisheries sector, from catching or breeding fish down the line to processing and marketing, in which women play an important part;
6. Recognises that Europe has various interests in the developing countries' exploitation of aquatic resources: commercial, eco-

nomical and social interests for the European fishing communities dependant on distant waters resources, as well as environmental concerns.

7. Recalls:

- its Resolution of 5 June 1997, which highlighted the growing pressure on fish stocks and the need to help the developing countries better to manage their resources, on the basis of best scientific data,
- its Conclusions of 30 October 1997 on policy on Fisheries Agreements with third Countries,
- its Conclusions of 25 April 2001 on a Strategy for the Integration of Environmental Concerns and

Sustainable Development into the Common Fisheries Policy, and

- its Conclusions of 18 June 2001 on the Biodiversity Action Plan for fisheries.

- Notes with concern that many developing countries are experiencing problems related to decreasing catches, while supply of fish is vital for their food security and their economic development;
- Reiterates that the Community and the Member States must implement fully the commitments, principles and objectives approved within the United Nations and other competent international organisations and in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the United Nations Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

(I) Guidelines for taking account of fisheries in the European Development Cooperation Policy:

- Confirms that support for sustainable development in the fisheries sector in the developing countries and the taking into account of the situation of the poorest communities which are dependent on fisheries are important topics which form part of development policy.

The Council therefore recommends a two-phase approach:

Short-term approach and transitional period:

- Sectoral approach:** The Council stresses that the political dialogue concerning development cooperation between the European Community and countries where the fisheries sector is important should place greater emphasis on this sector. As a result, fisheries should gradually take up a significant place in Country Strategy Processes, and indicative programmes if requested by Developing Countries. EC intervention should as a matter of priority aim at helping the partner country to draw up and implement a strategy for the sustainable development of the fishery sector. The EC should support efforts by developing countries to encourage their fishery sector and the people concerned to take ownership of those countries' fishery development strategies. The Council reiterates that the policies supported must take account of the principles recognised by the international community concerning sound and sustainable management of the resource. In particular the principles quoted in the Annex to this resolution should be put into practice. The Council considers that these policies should gradually make up a common frame of reference

for the various participants in the country's fishery sector.

The Council calls on the Commission to assist, at their request, developing countries to implement the following policies and measures:

- Improving governance in the sustainable management of resources focused towards poverty reduction and strengthening the participation of civil society;
- Supporting the implementation of national sector programmes (scientific knowledge, management of fishing activities, protection and valorisation of aquatic ecosystems, improvement of production, marketing, and contribution to food security);
- Support for sub-regional and regional cooperation for promoting the conservation and management of resources;
- Support for national and regional efforts to combat non-controlled and non-recorded illegal fishing (IUU - Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported) and particularly eliminating convenience flags.

- Horizontal approach:** in those countries where the communities which depend on bio-aquatic resources are amongst the most vulnerable, the Council recommends that the EC pay more attention to improving the living conditions of these communities in the framework of the various "priority intervention fields". Developing countries should take into account how important it is that people in the sector's civil society (coastal communities, small-scale fishermen, economic and professional organisations, local authorities, etc.) take part in framing and implementing the policies affecting them. The Council invites the Commission to step up its efforts to support civil society and to focus more closely on the major economic role played by women, who are frequently responsible for the processing and marketing of fish.

- At regional level** the Council invites the Commission to step up its efforts to strengthen systems and capacities for the collection, processing and circulation of data concerning fish stocks, ecosystems, the economic and social role of the sector and the fishing effort. These interventions should meet the needs of those managing the resource and fishing activities. Monitoring and surveillance operations are often best operated on a regional scale.

Long-term approach:

- In the longer term the political dialogue between the European Union and the developing countries (given tangible form by the establishment of Country Cooperation Strategy Papers) should form a joint framework built on the overarching development objective of poverty reduction and taking

into account the mutual interests of both sides. The European development cooperation strategy would be designed to support the country concerned to implement a sectoral fisheries policy including (depending on the state of fish stocks and the country's fishing capacity) the question of the necessary transparency regarding rights of access granted to foreign fishing fleets and control of fishing effort by all third countries' fishing vessels.

(II) Complementarity between the Community and the Member States:

- The Council concurs with the Commission's objective of strengthening the complementarity of the Community and the Member States on the subject of fisheries and poverty reduction. The interventions by the EC and the Member States should be coordinated in a consistent programme under the responsibility of the partner country. Depending on their comparative advantages, the Member States should be able to contribute, if necessary, to the implementation of Community aid programmes to benefit the fisheries sector and/or coastal communities which depend on that sector.

(III) Coherence: taking development objectives into account in the Common Fisheries Policy:

- The Council points out that, pursuant to the principle of Coherence, implementation of Common Fisheries Policy interventions which are likely to affect developing countries must take into account objectives of sustainable development and the fight against poverty, as laid down in Art. 178 of the Treaty. Le Conseil prend acte avec satisfaction des efforts accomplis par la Commission pour renforcer cette cohérence, à la suite notamment des Conclusions du Conseil de 1997 et invite la Commission à approfondir la mise en oeuvre de ce principe.

- The Council recognises that the EC's fisheries agreements have potential economic benefits for developing countries and can contribute to development objectives, in particular as defined by their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers where they exist, when they involve the following elements among others:

- well founded scientific knowledge of the country's fishery resources and determination of the allowable catch, ensuring that the maintenance of living resources is not endangered by over-exploitation. Fisheries agreements should respect article 62 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea: "The coastal State shall determine its capacity to harvest the living resources of the exclusive economic

zone. Where the coastal State does not have the capacity to harvest the entire allowable catch, it shall, through agreements or other arrangements "... give other States access to the surplus of the allowable catch".

- flexible adjustment of fishing possibilities on the basis of an assessment of the resources taking into account the best available scientific information and in accordance with the needs of the local fish industry;
- application of the precautionary principle as laid down in the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;
- implementation of protective measures for small-scale fishing and for subsistence fishing (in particular by strict observance of a protection zone);
- observance of the principles of good governance, with financial compensation having to be paid and used in accordance with sound budgetary management practice, and national Poverty Reduction plans.

The Council requests the Commission to ensure that the development and management of fisheries agreements be based on a functioning Monitoring-System of their environmental, economic and social impacts in Partner Countries.

Annex

Internationally agreed principles on aquatic resource-based development

Several major guiding principles, which direct action in development co-operation in the area of aquatic resource-based development, have been emphasised in a number of international declarations. With the acceptance of these principles, an international consensus has been built up on their application. The European Community has agreed on many occasions that it will apply these principles. Nine of these principles are presented below in the chronological order of the fora in which they were adopted:

Montego Bay, 1982

The Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea led to the signature of a Convention. This UN Convention entered into force on 16 November 1994. Its purpose is to favour the peaceful use of seas and oceans, the equitable and efficient use of their resources, the conservation of their biological resources and the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment.

Principle 1

Coastal States must favour an optimal use of biological resources in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). In doing so, they must pursue the preservation and re-generation of exploited species stocks to levels securing the maximum constant yield. They must take into

consideration ecological factors and the economic needs of coastal populations living from fisheries as well as the specific needs of developing States.

Principle 2

Coastal States determine their capacity of exploiting biological resources. If this capacity is less than the total admissible catch volume, they authorise other States, through agreements or other arrangements, to exploit the surplus of admissible catch volume.

Rio de Janeiro, June 1992

At the Rio Summit on Environment and Development, a Declaration and an action Agenda (Agenda 21) were adopted which include several recommendations and principles for application in the management of fishery resources.

Principle 3

Environmental concerns must be integrated in all development processes: "In order to achieve sustainable development, protection of the environment must constitute an integral part of the process of development and cannot be regarded in isolation".

Principle 4

The principle of precaution must be applied: "In order to protect the environment, precautionary measures must be widely applied by States in accordance with their ability to do so. Where there is a risk of serious or irreversible damage, the lack of absolute scientific certainty must not serve as a pretext for delaying the adoption of effective measures to prevent deterioration of the environment".

Principle 5

Local communities must be made responsible: "Local populations and communities and other local authorities have a vital role to play in the management and development of the environment because of their knowledge of it and their traditional practices".

Rome, October 1995

During the 28th FAO Conference the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries was approved by consensus. This optional code was prepared by the FAO as a result of the impetus provided by the Rio Summit to the consideration of sustainable development. It is designed to apply the principles of sustainable management to the resource. It adopts and defines the precautionary principle applied to the development of fishing. The following principles, which reinforce or supplement those already listed, should be noted:

Principle 6

The right to fish implies an obligation to do so in a responsible manner, the fishing effort must be proportional to the production capacity of the fishery resources.

Principle 7

States must co-operate at sub-regional, regional and world levels to promote the conservation and management of resources. "Increased pres-

sure on fish and a better knowledge of stocks will make the joint management of common stocks a priority".

Principle 8

The importance of the contribution of small scale fishing to employment and security of food supplies must be recognised, the rights of fishermen and workers in the fishing industry must be protected. Priority must be given to the nutritional needs of local communities. "Given recent trends, the management of fishing will progressively include the direct involvement of those involved in the fisheries business, the allocation of "user rights", decentralisation of allocation functions without the government abandoning its role of administrator, and self-financing of the sector".

Kyoto, December 1995

At the Kyoto International Conference on the sustainable contribution of fishing to food security, 95 States and the European Community affirmed their awareness of the "fact that if appropriate measures are not taken very rapidly the joint effect of demographic growth and economic growth on a world scale together with that of continuing over-fishing, overexploitation and deterioration of the aquatic environment will impose enormous constraints on the fisheries sector as regards its capacity to persistently maintain its essential contribution to the security of food supplies".

Principle 9

International trade in fish must not have an adverse effect on the environment and on food security for local populations: it is necessary to "ensure that trade in fish and fishery products increases the reliability of food supplies, and does not lead to deterioration of the environment or have an adverse effect on the nutritional rights and needs of populations for whom fish and fishing products are crucial for their health and well-being...".

Persistent and growing pressure on resources and the difficulties encountered by LDCs in pursuing sector policies which address the real needs of their populations has resulted in a wide divergence between the principles outlined above and the experience on the ground. ■

¹ Article 178: "The Community shall take account of the objectives referred to in Article 177 in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries";

Article 177: "1. Community policy in the sphere of development cooperation, which shall be complementary to the policies pursued by the Member States, shall foster:

- the sustainable economic and social development of the developing countries, and more particularly the most disadvantaged among them;
- the smooth and gradual integration of the developing countries into the world economy;
- the campaign against poverty in the developing countries.[...]"

² The Code of conduct has been signed by the European Community and almost all developing countries with which it has signed fisheries agreements.