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External fisheries

Ensuring sustainable fisheries beyond EU waters

The EU must continue to control its fishing outside the Union and open the door for transparency, according to Green MEP Linnea Engström. Linnea Engström's report on external dimension of fisheries was adopted by the European Parliament on Tuesday, 12 April.

While the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy has helped improve the sustainability of the fishing industry in European waters, there are still major problems with fisheries and fish stocks worldwide. The European Parliament has today set out clear proposals on how to deal with the problems of ensuring fisheries beyond European waters are made more sustainable and also transparent.

This implies ensuring the European fleet employs the most sustainable practises possible, whilst also using the CFP and bilateral fisheries agreements between the EU and third countries to improve the state of global fisheries and tackle illegal and unregulated fishing.

Fish is the main protein source for people on the African continent and this dependence is set to increase. Overfishing in the territorial waters of poorer countries water exacerbates food insecurity.

While the need for food from the sea is increasing, competition is fierce. Major players - such as China, Korea, Taiwan and Russia - are aggressively trying to get access to dwindling marine resources around the world. Many do not meet their obligations under international agreements and respect basic human rights. For this reason, the EU has a duty to show leadership.

The EU must promote sustainable fisheries in an international context. This implies that the needs of local communities from a fishery should come first. EU and external players should only be able to fish what remains of a sustainable quote for different fish stocks beyond these local needs.

The EU is currently the world's largest market for fish products and has one of the largest fishing fleets. This brings influence, and the EU must use this influence in the international arena to reduce overfishing and improve standards of transparency so as to fight corruption and end the slave labour on fishing vessels. We must lead the way towards sustainable global fisheries through a race to the top rather than the race to the bottom that lasted too long.

An encouraging example is the new fisheries agreement the EU has signed with Mauritania. In the negotiations, the EU managed to convince Mauritania that all fishing agreements it signs with third parties

should be made public. Previously, it was impossible to know how many countries have fished in the waters and how it affected the various fish stocks.

Transparency is important, not least for journalists and local fishermen's organisations in developing countries. They need information to hold their governments accountable if things do not go right. To get the full picture for us so we also need information about any private agreement that individual EU boats signed directly with the authorities in other countries. We also need rules and transparency in relation to joint ventures and how they are formed. Today, the picture is incomplete and it is not possible to ensure that we do not compete with developing countries' local fishing communities.

Bit by bit, we need to increase transparency and force other fishing nations to follow suit. The EU must continue to control its fishing outside the Union and open the door to more transparency.

Linnea Engström's report:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONSGML%2bREPORT%2bA8-2016-0052%2b0%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fSV>

European Commission website on fisheries beyond EU

http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/index_sv.htm

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