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Press release | 22.11.2012

External fisheries

EU must do much more to regulate overseas fishing and fish imports

The European Parliament today adopted a report setting out its opinion on the external dimension of fisheries policy. After the vote, the EP draftsperson/rapporteur Greens/EFA MEP **Isabella Lövin** (Sweden) stated:

"While the Commission has taken tentative steps to address the external dimension of fisheries, its proposals so far fall far short of what is needed. 28% of fish caught by the EU's fishing fleet are caught outside EU waters, while 60% of fish consumed in the EU is imported. The Common Fisheries Policy should reflect this in a more comprehensive manner.

"The EU should be taking the lead in the global push for sustainable fishing, rather than falling behind. This means only catching fish from surplus stocks. It also means decoupling development aid from fisheries agreements.

"While the Commission has made positive proposals to ensure EU boats fishing under the terms of bilateral fishing agreements do so in a sustainable manner, this is merely the tip of the iceberg as it excludes those fishing under private agreements or with reflagged vessels for example. The practise of 'flag hopping', whereby ship owners shift the flags of their vessels, needs to be prevented. MEPs today supported a Green proposal that a vessel that flags out and then returns to an EU flag will have to wait two years before fishing under the EU's bilateral agreements. In addition, member states should be required to monitor and provide information to the Commission on the fishing activities in other waters of all vessels or companies based in their jurisdiction (regardless of flagging).

"With regard to the fishing activities of the EU fleet beyond EU seas, covered under Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, the Commission's proposals for rights-based management are wrong-headed and could lead to the privatisation of fish stocks. Instead, the EU should be pushing for better management of these regional organisations, with binding independent advice on fisheries management that must be swiftly implemented and sanctions for states in non-compliance. There is also a need to ensure all high seas are covered by regional organisations, with a view to promoting sustainable fisheries."

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