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Conference
GREEN PAPER ON THE FUTURE MARITIME POLICY
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

(Brussels, 8 June 2006)

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN THE FUTURE
MARITIME POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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1. Introduction

COPA-COGECA and EUROPECHE, organisations defending the interests of the fishery and aquaculture sector in the European Union, and myself, speaking on behalf of both, wish to express our sincere gratitude to the organisers, for their kind invitation to participate in this Conference and for giving us the opportunity to present our preliminary reactions on the future Maritime Policy of the European Union to the participants.

Although it is still too early to analyse and assess the proposals recently published in the Green Paper on the future Maritime Policy of the European Union, COPA-COGECA and EUROPECHE welcome the initiative and its objectives.

Even if they are positive about such an initiative, these organisations hope that, in the frame of the future Maritime Policy, fishery and aquaculture will be granted the importance they deserve, in view of their clear involvement in the new field that is being regulated.

2. Initial position of the fishery and aquaculture sector

As I have already said, the first reaction of our sector on the political integration of the different activities regarding the seas and oceans, is positive and favourable to development of this policy.

Therefore, the initial position of COPA-COGECA and EUROPECHE can be summarised as follows:

- We are in favour of a co-ordination of the different maritime sectors and activities.
- We are dealing with activities that affect and condition each other: fisheries, aquaculture, harbours, maritime transport, marine environment, marine pollution, civil protection of the marine environment, management of the estuaries, management of the coastal marine areas, maritime safety, ship building, wind power energy and marine investigation and science.
- We are in favour of finding synergies that lead to a better co-ordinated and efficient development of policies given that nowadays, each sector and activity is treated separately.
- We support the adoption of European measures and in this perspective, we suggest that the common aspects of the different sectors and activities be examined in such a way that they are managed through Community policies, though with an efficient application by means of the subsidiarity principle.
- We are in favour of a large and transparent consultation. The EU Maritime Policy constitutes an opportunity to integrate the management of the different sectors in one and the same policy. Hence the importance to establish, in agreement with the principle of good governance, a procedure of rational and well-thought consultation that includes all stakeholders and that avoids the duplication of the work carried out in the different existing consultation bodies.

In this perspective, reference should be made to the necessity of consulting the stakeholders before proposing positions or adopting legislative acts that will be submitted in the international organisations: the United Nations Organisation (UNO), regional fishery organisations (RFO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), etc.

3. Possibility to co-ordinate different maritime activities in a Community framework

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The fishery sector represented by COPA-COGECA and EUROPECHE is in favour of adopting European integrated measures.

In various international fora and on numerous occasions, it has been proposed to consider the different inter-related problems of the seas and oceans in a global way, given the frequent interaction between the different maritime activities.

We have also frequently demonstrated that these activities are working for their full and intense individual development and that the objective of sustainable development, recognised by all, is a challenge that can only be achieved by means of the joint consideration and coordination of all these activities.

Therefore, we consider – as recognised by other stakeholders as well in the past – that for the time being, the European policy treats every sector related to the maritime activity separately. This is the case for fisheries and aquaculture, maritime transports, shipbuilding, pollution, tourism, harbours, science and research, etc.

As a consequence, our sector – as proposed by the European Commission – is in favour of implementing an integrated coastal and maritime management and development. In this perspective, intersectoral synergies should be sought and promoted in order to bring them together in the most adequate way and make them as beneficial as possible as a whole through a Community policy framework.

4. Fisheries and aquaculture in the future European Common Maritime Policy

Today, fisheries and aquaculture already have a common regulatory framework that co-ordinates, rationalises and integrates the most important aspects of these activities in all Member States. Thus, it is one of the sectors that are already managed by a Community policy and that can easily integrate in a future EU Maritime Policy.

As underlined by the Commission, the EU is the third largest fishery producer in the world. More than half a million people work in the European fishery sector and the average consumption of fish in the European Union amounts to 24,5 kilograms per capita per year, a figure superior to the world average of 16 kg per capita per year.

Moreover, the EU fishery sector owns about 90.000 fishing boats and, according to various economic studies, this production activity affects,

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more or less directly, more than 54 different sectors of the economy of the European Union.

Presently, the development of the fishery activity is narrowly linked to the marine environment and the sector makes huge efforts to look for adequate measures and solutions to improve one of its major problems in certain maritime areas as is over-fishing. The results of the application of intersectoral policies, aimed at obtaining the sustainability of the fishery and aquaculture activities, become gradually more eloquent.

As regards the marine strategy, we should make sure that the Directorate General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs bases itself on the existing strategic and legal instruments in this field, developed by the Directorate General for Environment, when developing the maritime policy.

Generally it can be stated that the fishery uses the seas and oceans in a sustainable way through the application of the rules established by the CFP. Moreover, the fishery resources are renewable, which is not the case for other extractive activities.

On the other hand, it is indispensable to refer to the Convention of the United Nations regarding the Maritime Law, aimed at promoting a peaceful use of the seas and oceans, a fair and efficient use of its resources, the conservation of the living resources, as well as the study, protection and conservation of the marine environment.

Nevertheless, the adequate balance between the necessity to use the resources in a sustainable way and the necessity to reach the socio-economic development of fishermen should be found.

The recognition of the impact of other activities than fishery on the marine resources (marine pollution, transport, noise pollution, climatic change, etc.) is an important step forward for the fishery sector. In this context, global studies are necessary. The fishery sector feels that it is the only one targeted by the EU legislation, while little is done to avoid pollution, etc. An integrated maritime policy can lead to a clearer view of the real situation regarding some changes in fish stocks or the decrease of certain species.

Although the sector is ready to accept the development of an ecosystem approach as regards fishery management in accordance with the reformed CFP, it is worried by the additional restrictions that might result from the Natura 2000 network and other possible Protected Marine Areas (PMA) which might affect the unrestricted access and fishery

activities in these areas. The development of fishery activities that do not harm the protection objectives should be allowed in these areas.

While recognising the interest of the Habitat and Bird Directives so as to encourage the conservation of the species and habitats in the Community waters or to promote the health of the coastal and marine environment in general (Framework Directive on Water), we should point out that their application might restrict even more the possibilities of the sector to operate in a viable way.

All the threats and requests of the ecosystem lead to the necessity of consulting the sector before proposing measures regarding the use of the sea, allowing hence proposals to promote the cohabitation of the activities and to minimise the possible conflicts of interest.

Guaranteeing the continuity of the sector as a source of supply for healthy and valuable food for the consumers, requires the drawing up of a policy that finds a right balance between the legitimate requirements of all the sectors involved without working at the expense of the fishery sector.

5. Summary and conclusions

- Although the fishery and aquaculture sector expresses its worry to lose the specific treatment it is being granted today, it is ready to contribute to the objective of establishing a frame that integrates all maritime activities in the European Union.
- Our sector, that is a maritime socio-economic activity, proposes a new maritime policy with objectives that are oriented towards a sustainable development comprising both an environmental and socio-economic dimension, generating employment and wealth in the European Union.
- Fisheries and aquaculture being already regulated by a Community policy can be integrated in a European maritime frame with less efforts than required for the other maritime sectors depending on national regulatory competences.
- The fishery sector represented by these organisations is in favour of a new EU maritime policy but will express its opinion on the legal frame that is most appropriate for this initiative after studying in detail the recent proposals from the European Commission taken up in the Green Paper on the Maritime Policy.
- In any case, COPA-COGECA and EUROPECHE believe that the creation of a framework that integrates the maritime sectors and activities should

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be accompanied by a large, coherent and transparent consultation in which all stakeholders can give their opinion on this process.

- Moreover, in the light of what is mentioned above, COPA-COGECA and EUROPECHE urge the European Commission to put implement, amongst others, the following actions:
 - Promote and apply a territorial plan for the Community waters answering to the emergency of maintaining a sustainable and geographically representative fishery sector that particularly respects the needs of the communities highly depending on this sector.
 - Assess the impact of the Community policy on the different human uses of seas and oceans other than fisheries (fuel, gas, energy, aggregates, etc.) and on the fishery resources, so as to obtain a general strategic vision on the development and the territorial distribution of these industries, while avoiding to undermine the sustainable fishing practices.
 - Evaluate the consequences of the European Directives regarding birds and habitats in the fishery sector, as well as the consequences of these directives on the Community Common Fisheries Policy.