Fisheries restrictions and jurisdictional waters in the Mediterranean and Black Sea - ways for conflict resolution

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on fisheries restrictions and jurisdictional waters in the Mediterranean and Black Sea ways for conflict resolution.

Parliament highlighted the fact that, by 2025, urban development in the Mediterranean may reach a level of 60%, with a third of the population concentrated in coastal areas, thus doubling the demand on water and on fishing resources. It recalled that the Mediterranean and the Black Sea have specific characteristics from an oceanographic, fisheries, environmental and socio-economic perspective and that the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins have a very low water renewal rate (80-90 years and 140 years respectively) and are therefore extremely sensitive to marine pollution.

It underlined that approximately 75% of the fish stocks of the Mediterranean Sea are over-exploited.

Combating overfishing: expressing their concern over greater competition for fewer stocks and marine resources, leading to the creation of regional tensions and possible disputes between coastal states about maritime areas, Parliament, in that context, called for increased efforts at regional, national, and EU levels towards enhancing the regulation of access to resources. It urged all littoral states to intensify their efforts to phase out overfishing in the Mediterranean and Black Sea and believed that marine management in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea required a greater degree of political cohesion and cooperation among the coastal states concerned.

Members also pointed out that the peaceful settlement of disputes concerning maritime areas and the delimitation of maritime boundaries, in conformity with the rights and obligations of Member States and third countries under EU and international law, is an essential element of good governance of the oceans.

Joint management of stocks: in order to improve cooperation among neighbouring littoral states and the joint management of stocks, Parliament invited the European Union to seek to conclude sustainable fisheries cooperation agreements with those countries. It took the view that the aim of these cooperation agreements would not be to secure fishing rights for EU vessels but to create a situation in which the EU provides funding and technical support to the third country in question.

Improvement of the monitoring, control, security and safety of coastal and territorial waters, exclusive economic zones (EEZs): Parliament called on the Union and its Member States to work together to ensure the monitoring, control, security and safety of coastal and territorial waters, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), the continental shelf, and maritime infrastructure and marine resources.

It called for:

- the promotion of dialogue between Member States and third countries, so as to ensure that they value the principles of the EU Common Fisheries Policy;
- the development of a regional approach to fish conservation and fishing in Mediterranean and Black Sea waters;
- enhanced environmental protection and sustainable development in these basins as a means of contributing to enhanced environmental protection of coastal and marine space;
- the introduction of integrated coastal zone management and maritime spatial planning (e.g. as regards offshore wind power generation, the laying of underwater cables and pipelines, maritime transport, fisheries and aquaculture and the creation of restocking areas, etc.);
- the establishment of maritime zones, in particular exclusive economic zones and protected maritime areas, which will not only improve fisheries conservation and management beyond territorial waters but will also promote sustainable fisheries resources;
- the improved assessment of stocks on a scientific basis;
- the setting in place of an enhanced system of monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing activity within an integrated perspective to enhance ecosystem conservation in both basins, thereby contributing to the long-term sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and to combating IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing.