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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Questions for Oral Answer B6-0162/2008 and B6-0163/2008

pursuant to Rule 108(5) of the Rules of Procedure

by Carmen Fraga Estevez

on behalf of the PPE-DE Group

on the crisis in the fisheries sector following the rise in the price of diesel fuel

European Parliament resolution on the crisis in the fisheries sector following the rise in the price of diesel fuel

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 108(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. having regard to the gravity of the crisis affecting the Community fisheries sector in the wake of ever-rising fuel prices, with increases totalling 300% over the last five years and 40% since January 2008,
- B. whereas, by contrast, the prices of fisheries products are at a level similar to that of twenty years ago, and, for some species, have even fallen considerably - by as much as 25% since the beginning of the year - thanks to a massive flow of imports originating in illegal fishing,
- C. whereas the fisheries sector, unlike other economic sectors, cannot pass on higher fuel prices via the price of its products at the initial point of sale, since as things stand fishermen are not in a position to determine prices,
- D. whereas the continual worsening of this crisis, despite the restructuring plans in force and the successive readjustments made at enterprise level, has led to numerous fishing enterprises ceasing to be economically viable, while many others are now very much at risk, and this is giving rise to widespread protests in many Member States,
- E. whereas on 28 May 2008 the three European organisations representing fishing as such - Europêche, AEOP and Cogeca - met the Commissioner for Fisheries and presented the demands of the sector,
- F. whereas the problem can only be dealt with on the basis of substantial measures for the short, medium and long term,
 1. Calls on the Commission to draw up provisions forthwith to enable Member States to make employers' and workers' costs more flexible, via, among other measures at national level, reducing social security payments for both employers and workers on fishing vessels, as well for shore workers directly related to fishing as such,
 2. With regard to the Community rules on state aids:
 - a) calls on the Member States to pay, as a matter of urgency, *de minimis* aids up to the maximum of EUR 30 000 per enterprise permitted under the Community rules, to all enterprises requesting or having requested such aid;
 - b) calls on the Commission to revise the existing rules and to increase that sum to EUR 100 000, on a per vessel rather than per enterprise basis, thus bringing it into line with the permitted aid levels for other economic sectors;

- c) reminds Member States of the new Community guidelines on state aids in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, which permit tax concessions and lower labour costs for Community vessels fishing in non-Community waters, and calls for such exemptions to be facilitated immediately for vessels requesting them;
3. Recalls that, apart from rising diesel fuel prices, one of the recurrent causes for complaint on the part of the fleet with regard to the fall in the prices of its products concerns the massive imports of cheap fisheries products deriving from illegal fishing; calls, therefore, for:
 - a) more frequent and tougher controls on imports deriving from illegal, undeclared and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing); to this end, it is essential, as a matter of urgency, to implement the proposal for a regulation establishing a Community system for the prevention, discouragement and elimination of IUU fishing, as already adopted by Parliament and now being debated in Council;
 - b) more frequent and tougher health checks on fisheries products from third countries, so as to ensure that imports meet the same standards as Community products;
 - c) reform of the regulation on the COM in fishery and aquaculture products so as to give fishermen more say in setting price levels and enhance the value added of their products, such that all or at least part of the increase in diesel fuel prices can be reflected in fish prices at the initial point of sale;
 - d) provision of more and better information on origin for fisheries products, and, above all, guarantees and controls concerning mandatory labelling for purposes of information in all cases, as well as legal action against fraudulent labelling;
4. Urges all Member States to implement the adjustment plans for the fleet and provide the necessary funds for voluntary fleet restructuring; with this in mind:
 - a) urges the Commission to establish priority criteria for the fleet segments most affected by this crisis;
 - b) considers it essential to reprogramme the national operational programmes under the European Fisheries Fund;
5. Urges the Commission to draw up specific proposals to alleviate matters in the most fisheries-dependent zones;
6. Calls on the Council of Fisheries Ministers to be held on 23 June 2008 to deal with the matter as a priority issue and to take measures to tackle the crisis;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Member States, and the European representative organisations of the fisheries sector.