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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 Marie-Hélène Aubert and Carl Schlyter

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

on the crisis in the fisheries sector caused by rising fuel oil prices

European Parliament resolution on the crisis in the fisheries sector caused by rising fuel oil prices

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 108(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the recent increases in the price of fuel have had a serious economic impact on the fishing industry, especially those sectors that use active fishing gear that is energy-intensive,
- B. whereas the situation is exacerbated by the inability of many fishermen to pass on the costs of their activities in their sale price, owing to the current market structure and the dominance of corporate intermediaries,
- C. whereas historically, in many Member States, the available EU subsidies have too often been used to support the development of large-scale, energy-intensive, environmentally destructive fishing fleets, on the assumption that energy would remain inexpensive,
- D. whereas despite substantial reductions in capacity in some fleets, many fleets in the EU remain too large relative to the resources that are available to be caught on a sustainable basis, so that further capacity reductions are necessary in those fleets,
- E. whereas high energy costs are not a temporary phenomenon, but rather structural and permanent in nature, and whereas the sector must adapt accordingly,
- F. whereas simply using more energy-efficient motors will not solve the problem of an industry that is highly dependent on inexpensive energy, and could even result in an increase in fishing effort,
- G. whereas fisheries are highly affected by globalisation, and the EU fleet must compete in a market where declining price trends also have an impact on economic viability,
- H. whereas certain Member States have initiated schemes aimed at reducing fuel consumption by their fleets and whereas such innovations are to be supported,
- I. whereas Member States have a key role to play in fisheries conservation measures, having been given responsibilities in areas such as the allocation of days at sea and of quotas within their own fleets; whereas they should consequently have a key role in developing and encouraging energy efficiency within their own fleets,
- J. whereas the Energy Taxation Directive (Council Directive 2003/96/EC of 27 October 2003¹) already allows Member States to provide partial or total exemption for the purchase of marine diesel, though not all of them have acted on this,

¹ OJ L 283, 31.10.2003, p. 51.

1. Concludes in consequence that there is an urgent need for the European fishing fleets to restructure so as to move away from energy-intensive, environmentally destructive fishing vessels and gear and to adopt more benign practices that require less energy and are more sustainable in the long term, environmentally, socially and economically;
2. Considers that conversion and diversification of fishing gear has an important role to play and that reducing energy dependence could lead to increased employment in the sector;
3. Calls upon the Commission and the Member States to consult widely with the fishing sector and other interested parties to solicit their ideas on the best ways to achieve such an objective, recognising that the situation and therefore the solutions will not necessarily be the same in all fisheries or regions;
4. Considers that capacity reduction programmes should favour the removal of those vessels that consume the most energy and inflict the most damage on the marine environment;
5. Recognises that such a restructuring will require financial support both for the fleet and for the fishermen who work on the vessels, and urges the Member States to take advantage of the options already provided under the EFF; similarly urges the Commission to show flexibility in its approval process, providing the programmes result in more energy-conservative fishing practices;
6. Considers that the ongoing reform of the COM provides an opportunity to develop mechanisms that would provide a fair price to fishermen which reflects their costs while keeping the final sale price affordable for consumers; recognises that this would require a mechanism to reduce the commercial dominance of the intermediaries in the marketplace;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Governments of the Member States and the representatives of the European fisheries sector organisations.