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Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Transport and Tourism

on Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the
Oceans and Seas
(2006/2299(INI))

Draftsman: Satu Hassi

(*) Enhanced cooperation between committees – Rule 47 of the Rules of
Procedure

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Green Paper on a future Maritime Policy for the EU is a very welcome document, for, as the Paper itself notes:

our continued enjoyment of the benefits that [our seas] provide will only be possible through a profound respect for them at a time when their resources are threatened by severe pressures and our increasing technological ability to exploit them. The accelerated reduction of marine biodiversity due notably to pollution, impacts of climate change and overfishing are warning signals that we cannot ignore. (pages 5-6)

It is high time that the Commission takes the initiative to try to develop a coordinated and coherent maritime policy.

In addition to frequently pointing out the extent to which the marine environment has been degraded, the Paper also makes other important points with which your draftsman agrees:

- deterioration of the marine environment reduces the potential for employment;
- any EU policy must be developed in an international context;
- development and introduction of new technologies to ensure environmental sustainability can lead to jobs and export opportunities;
- data are poor on use of the marine environment (lack of data, data not comparable between Member States, etc.) and proposals are made for improvements.

There is a desperate need for a system of spatial planning for maritime activities, based on an ecosystem approach that would, when necessary, place restrictions on activities (see page 34).

The Paper states that the maritime policy is to be based upon two pillars - the Lisbon Strategy and the Thematic Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment. Your draftsman recognises that it can be difficult to reconcile the demands of economic growth and environmental conservation, but feels that too much emphasis on the short-term benefits of economic growth can, in the longer term, lead to considerable damage, both environmentally and economically. It is clear from the Paper that the Commission recognises the potential for economic growth that can result from a commitment to conserving the marine environment - offshore energy, cleaner forms of marine transport, ship-building and other technologies to ensure environmental sustainability are mentioned.

Your draftsman urges the Committee to ensure that the Marine Strategy Directive, which is the legislative pillar of the EU's commitment to marine conservation, not be weakened during the process of its final adoption, nor as a result of discussions on the Maritime Policy. It is particularly important to keep the definition of good environmental status contained therein, as well as to push the Member States to fully apply other environmental legislation, such as the Habitats directive, Natura 2000, and others.

Climate change is of such fundamental importance to the EU, and the rest of the world, that the EU's campaign to reduce emissions must be one of its highest priorities. Transport in all

its forms (air, road, sea) contributes an ever-increasing share of overall greenhouse gas emissions, and the Commission urgently needs to make proposals to reduce them, which would have the additional benefit of contributing to employment through the development of technological expertise that other countries will need.

Finally, one subject is conspicuous by its absence from the Paper. The military is only mentioned for its potential positive contributions to a maritime policy, through search and rescue, law enforcement, etc. No mention is made of the environmental destruction that can be caused by the military establishment of the Member States and their activities. This oversight should be mentioned in the resolution.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Transport and Tourism, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Recalls its resolution of 14 November 2006 on a Thematic Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment¹ and reiterates, in particular, the need for
 - the overarching objective of the EU to be the sustainable use of the seas and conservation of marine ecosystems, including a strong EU policy on marine protection, preventing further loss of biodiversity and deterioration of the marine environment;
 - the inclusion of a common EU-wide definition of good environmental status;
 - the European Environment Agency to provide regular assessments of the marine environment, which necessitates improvements in national data collection, reporting and exchange;
 - recognition of the importance of prior consultation, coordination and cooperation with neighbouring states in the adoption and implementation of the forthcoming Marine Strategy Directive (COM(2005)0505 – C6-0346/2005 – 2005/0211(COD)), as stressed in its position of 14 November 2006²;
2. Recognises that a healthy marine environment constitutes the basis for sustainable development of the shipping sector in the EU and recalls the EU's commitment to succeed in incorporating the environmental dimension into all aspects of Community policy;
3. Insists that a clean marine environment, with sufficient biodiversity to ensure the proper functioning of its component ecosystems, is essential for Europe; further insists that the intrinsic value of maritime areas means that the benefits of a good marine environmental status in the EU extend well beyond the potential economic gains from exploitation of the various components of the seas, coastal waters and river basins and that therefore the conservation and, in many cases, rehabilitation of the EU's marine environment is mandatory;
4. Recalls the principle of the ecosystem approach to management of human activities, one of the key elements of the Thematic Strategy on the Marine Environment; insists that this principle be applied also with regard to the Maritime Policy;
5. Is thus convinced that renewable resources of the marine environment can and should be used sustainably so that their exploitation, and the resulting economic benefits, can continue in the long term; stresses the need, therefore, for the various policies concerned

¹ P6_TA(2006)0486.

² P6_TA(2006)0482.

to adapt to the requirements of a healthy marine environment; calls in this connection also for greater use of onshore and offshore wind power in order to exploit sustainably its potential from the point of view of employment and economic policy;

6. Stresses that onshore and offshore wind power has very substantial potential for development and could make a major contribution to climate protection, and therefore calls on the Commission to take action by establishing a section or coordinating unit for wind power and launching a wind power action plan;
7. Cannot stress enough that the criteria selected to define good environmental status must be sufficiently far-reaching since these quality objectives will probably constitute the benchmark for action programmes for a long time to come;
8. Also considers that measures to improve water quality must be taken swiftly and is, therefore, concerned at the extended timetable proposed in the proposal for a directive on a marine strategy;
9. Believes that it is important, therefore, to coordinate the timetable for drawing up the marine strategy action plans with important programmes at EU level, such as the EU's Structural Funds, in order to obtain the greatest possible benefits of coordination with existing programmes; considers that the action plans should, therefore, be drawn up by 2012 at the latest to facilitate coordination with the drafting of the structural programmes from 2014; stresses that coordination with the EU's agricultural fund (FEADER) is of particular importance for those regions in which agriculture is responsible for a significant portion of discharges into the sea;
10. Insists that the implementation of a network of marine protected areas be accelerated;
11. Alarmed by impacts of climate change on marine ecosystems even in the most positive climate protection scenarios, calls for due attention to be paid to the additional vulnerability of marine environment to other stress factors due to these impacts; insist that greenhouse gas emissions from maritime activities must urgently be addressed by effective measures such as including maritime transport in emission trading and making greater use of renewable energies to propel ships;
12. Considers that a substantial reduction in nitrogen oxides and particulates could be achieved if energy were supplied to ships from land while they were in port and calls on the Commission therefore to support appropriate measures;
13. Is concerned by reports which suggest that maritime carbon dioxide emissions are higher than previously thought, representing up to 5% of global emissions, and are projected to rise by as much as 75% in the next 15 to 20 years unless action is taken to counter the trend; points out that greenhouse gas emissions from fishing vessels are significant; noting the lack of progress within the IMO on this issue despite the mandate given in the Kyoto Protocol ten years ago, urges the Commission to propose legislation to effectively reduce maritime greenhouse gas emissions and for the EU to take decisive action to include the maritime sector in international climate conventions;
14. Notes that most pollution in the marine environment originates from land-based sources, including but not limited to agricultural runoff and industrial emissions, which have an

especially deleterious impact on closed and semi-enclosed seas; stresses that the EU must pay particular attention to these areas and take measures to limit and prevent further pollution; also considers that the new GMES technology (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) could be successfully used for that purpose;

15. Recognising that ship-sourced air pollutant emissions will exceed those from land-based sources in the foreseeable future, recalls its request in the context of the Thematic Strategy on Air Quality for the Commission and the Member States to take urgent measures to cut emissions from the shipping sector and for the Commission to come forward with proposals
 - to establish NO_x emission standards for ships using EU ports;
 - to designate the Mediterranean Sea and the North-East Atlantic as Sulphur Emission Control Areas (SECAs) under the MARPOL Convention;
 - to lower the maximum allowed sulphur content in marine fuels used in SECAs by passenger vessels from 1.5% to 0.5%;
 - to introduce fiscal measures such as taxes or charges on SO₂ and NO_x emissions from ships;
 - to encourage the introduction of differentiated port and fairway charges favouring vessels with low SO₂ and NO_x emissions;
 - to encourage the use of shore-side electricity by ships when in port;
 - for an EU directive on the quality of marine fuels;
16. Notes with concern that the Baltic Sea is currently one of the most polluted seas in the world, and reminds the Commission of its previous call for the drafting of a recommendation on an EU strategy for the Baltic, proposing measures to improve the condition of the environment of the Baltic Sea, particularly to reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic and to prevent emissions of oil and other toxic and damaging substances into the sea; recalls that existing instruments for cooperation such as INTERREG programmes should be fully exploited when implementing interregional projects to improve the state of the Baltic environment;
17. Stresses the need to include efforts to develop scientific and technological innovations in the field of maritime research within, and by increasing the funding for, the joint European research programmes;
18. Is convinced that a clean marine environment is critical for marine species, both commercial fish and others that are not exploited, and that any recovery of depleted fish stocks depends on a reduction in marine pollution as well as in fishing effort; considers that in order to ensure that fish meal used in the EU is not contaminated, it is imperative to reduce marine pollutants;

19. Considers that the full and timely implementation of all EU environmental legislation (inter alia the Water Framework Directive¹, Habitats² and Birds Directives³, Nitrates Directive⁴, Marine Fuel Sulphur Directive⁵, Directive on Penal Sanctions for Marine Pollution⁶) is imperative for conserving the quality of the marine environment, and that the Commission should employ all necessary pressure to encourage the Member States to do so, including, if necessary, legal action;
20. Draws attention to the sometimes disastrous impact of exotic organisms in the marine ecosystem and recognises that invasive alien species are an important threat to marine biodiversity; calls on the Commission to take urgent measures to prevent the transfer of organisms in ballast water and to introduce effective controls on the discharge of ballast water within EU waters;
21. In the context of improving enforcement of EU environmental legislation and prevention of marine pollution, recalls its earlier demand for the Commission to study the feasibility of establishing a European coastguard service;
22. Acknowledges that good governance of the resources of the marine environment requires a solid information base; stresses therefore the importance of sound scientific knowledge of the marine environment in order to assist cost-effective decision making and to avoid measures that do not add value; insists therefore that marine research be given special emphasis in terms of resource allocation to enable sustainable and effective environmental improvements to be made;
23. Is convinced that the precautionary principle, as embodied in Article 174(2) of the EC Treaty, must form the basis of all types of exploitation of the maritime zones of the EU; stresses that lack of scientific certainty should therefore not be used as an excuse for delaying preventive action;
24. Considers that the concept of corporate social responsibility is of limited value in the context of conserving the marine environment, compared to legislation, and that therefore a proper legislative base must continue to underpin the Community programme for environmental conservation, to be strengthened by voluntary actions undertaken by companies wishing to demonstrate their responsible behaviour;
25. Stresses that the EU must actively engage in maritime governance at international level in order to promote a level playing field for maritime economy without compromising ambition on environmental sustainability of maritime activities;

¹ OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1. (Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy).

² OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7. (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).

³ OJ L 103, 25.4.1979, p. 1. (Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds).

⁴ OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1. (Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources).

⁵ OJ L 121, 11.5.1999, p. 13. (Council Directive 1999/32/EC of 26 April 1999 relating to a reduction in the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels and amending Directive 93/12/EEC).

⁶ OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 11. (Directive 2005/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on ship-source pollution and on the introduction of penalties for infringements).

26. Recognises the importance of the coastal zone for the development of renewable energy which forms a crucial and integral part of the EU's efforts to combat global climate change; points out that proper zoning for purposes of maritime spatial planning to allow for the development of sites for the exploitation of wind, tide and other forms of power will therefore be necessary in order to minimise conflict with other users of the marine environment and avoid degrading the environment, taking account of environmental impact assessments (EIA); welcomes the significant opportunities offered by the growing renewable energy industries for the creation of employment and technical expertise in the EU;
27. Reconfirms its position of 14 November 2006 on the Marine Strategy Directive, and in particular as regards the prohibitions and/or criteria for systematic/intentional disposal of any solid materials, liquid or gas into the water column, seabed/subsoil; furthermore considers that any storage of carbon dioxide into the seabed and subsoil should be subject to authorisation under international law, prior environmental impact assessment in accordance with Council Directive 85/337/EEC¹ and relevant international conventions, as well as regular monitoring and controls;
28. Recognises that for the Marine Strategy to be the 'environmental pillar' of the Maritime Policy, the policies need to be fully complementary to ensure consistency in the EU's approach; recognises that carbon dioxide storage in sub-seabed geological structures could provide part of a portfolio of measures for greenhouse gas emission reductions in the atmosphere and calls for the creation of a clear legislative and regulatory framework for the deployment of this technology;
29. Insists that planning of all development along the Community's lengthy coast, for urban development, industrial sites, ports and marinas, recreational sites etc., must explicitly take into consideration the consequences of climate change and associated rise in sea level, including the increasing frequency and strength of storms and greater wave height; insists that no new nuclear installations be built in coastal areas;
30. Considers that the concept of "clustering" could have positive impacts on the marine environment if habitat conservation, pollution control, and other environmental technologies are incorporated into the design and implementation of clusters from the planning stages onwards; notes that the sharing of best environmental technologies and better (transnational) cooperation between ports as well as more efficient use of free port capacity should constitute an important component of the cluster concept;
31. Welcomes the recognition by the Commission that a "comprehensive system of spatial planning" is necessary in order to ensure a stable regulatory environment and a legally binding basis for decision making; considers that an essential criterion for effective ecosystem-based spatial planning must be to organise activities in such a way as to keep the impact of environmentally damaging activities out of ecologically sensitive areas at the same time as using resources in all other areas in an ecologically sustainable manner; in this context insists on the use of the Strategic Environmental Assessment instrument²;

¹ OJ L 175, 5.7.1985, p. 40. (Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment).

² OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30. (Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June

32. Insists, however, that coastal zone management must have as one of its core objectives to conserve the marine environment, rather than to set aside a few sample areas as a token to conservation, particularly in the light of Recommendation 2002/413/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe¹;
33. In this context agrees with the Commission that there is a natural limit to the amount of human activity, in terms of population density and industrial activity, that coastal zones can support without severe and possibly irreversible environmental degradation; supports, therefore, the view of the Commission that a comprehensive study is needed in order to be better able to identify these limits and to forecast and plan accordingly;
34. Notes that the achievement of good environmental status also requires that human activities conducted outside ecologically sensitive areas be strictly regulated so as to minimise any possible negative impact on the marine environment;
35. Endorses the view in the Green Paper that there are significant and serious problems with the data available on the condition of the marine environment and the activities that are either conducted or have an impact there; supports, therefore, the call for much improved programmes of data collection, mapping and surveying, vessel tracking, etc. in those areas involving the Member States, the Marine Conventions, the Commission and other Community bodies such as the European Environment Agency and European Maritime Safety Agency; stresses the importance of exchanging best practices at national, regional and European level;
36. Notes that the Green Paper mentions several useful contributions that can be made by the military, including search and rescue, disaster relief and surveillance at sea; regrets, however, that no mention is made of the environmental degradation that can be caused by the military establishment, such as weapons testing, construction of naval bases and the use of high intensity underwater sonar systems which can have a detrimental effect on cetaceans leading to deafness, internal organ damage and fatal mass stranding; insists, in this respect, that military activities be fully incorporated in the maritime policy and be subject to full environmental impact assessment and liability.

2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment).

¹ OJ L 148, 6.6.2002, p. 24.

PROCEDURE

Title	Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the Oceans and Seas
Procedure number	2006/2299(INI)
Committee responsible	TRAN
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	ENVI 14.12.2006
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary	14.12.2006
Draftsman Date appointed	Satu Hassi 23.1.2007
Previous draftsman	
Discussed in committee	21.3.2007
Date adopted	8.5.2007
Result of final vote	+ : 41 – : 0 0 : 1
Members present for the final vote	Adamos Adamou, Georgs Andrejevs, Margrete Auken, Irena Belohorská, Johannes Blokland, John Bowis, Frieda Brepoels, Hiltrud Breyer, Martin Callanan, Dorette Corbey, Chris Davies, Avril Doyle, Mojca Drčar Murko, Jill Evans, Satu Hassi, Gyula Hegyi, Jens Holm, Marie Anne Isler Béguin, Dan Jørgensen, Christa Klač, Urszula Krupa, Marie-Noëlle Lienemann, Linda McAvan, Alexandru-Ioan Morțun, Roberto Musacchio, Péter Olajos, Miroslav Ouzký, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Karin Scheele, Carl Schlyter, Horst Schnellhardt, Kathy Sinnott, Antonios Trakatellis, Thomas Ulmer, Anja Weisgerber, Åsa Westlund, Anders Wijkman, Glenis Willmott
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Christofer Fjellner, Adam Gierek, Alojz Peterle, Andres Tarand
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	
Comments (available in one language only)	