

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0083/04/rev.1
pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure
by Philippe Morillon, on behalf of the Committee on Fisheries
to the Commission

Subject: International plan of action on bycatch reduction

According to the most recent data published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 7.3 million tonnes of non-target marine species are discarded globally each year as a result of unselective fishing practices. Over the past 10 years, the EU budget has annually contributed € 8 million to over 400 research projects aimed at increasing gear selectivity, reducing discards or quantifying the impact of fishing on the environment. It is vital that the focus now shifts to the implementation of much-needed bycatch reduction measures.

Furthermore, bycatch is a global problem and remains one of the principal fisheries issues of the 21st century not to be addressed by an FAO International Plan of Action (IPOA). The adoption of an IPOA on bycatch reduction is urgently required and could play a pivotal role in reducing bycatch internationally. 180 leading marine scientists and NGOs advocate the adoption of an IPOA on bycatch reduction, and several member nations of the FAO have already committed to supporting such a proposal at the next meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in March 2005.

As yet, no nation has pledged to take a lead in proposing this initiative. Given that the EU is a major fishing power, is the European Commission therefore committed to taking a lead in proposing an IPOA on bycatch reduction at the 26th COFI Session of the FAO?

Does the Commission recognise that if an IPOA on bycatch reduction is not put on the FAO agenda in 2005, it will be necessary to wait until the next COFI Session in 2007?

Tabled: 08.12.2004

Forwarded: 10.12.2004

Deadline for reply: 17.12.2004