



2016/2228(INI)

7.12.2016

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on the Environment,
Public Health and Food Safety

on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic
(2016/2228(INI))

Rapporteur: Jarosław Wałęsa

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committees responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) establishes a treaty regime to govern activities on the world's oceans; whereas the development of a framework regarding marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction under UNCLOS would and should include the Arctic region;
- B. whereas the Sami, Nenets, Khanty, Evenk, Chukchi, Aleut, Yupik and Inuit cultures need to be protected pursuant to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); whereas the indigenous population of the Arctic has the right to use natural resources in its home area and should thus be part of any future plans for commercial fishing;
- C. whereas climate change will make the Arctic region accessible to commercial fisheries in the next years, which, given the highly sensitive nature of this unique region, must be developed with the greatest care;
- D. whereas it is important to differentiate between the Arctic high seas in which no commercial fisheries activities are currently taking place, and the adjacent Arctic Region in which regional negotiation fora for fisheries management have already been established;
- E. whereas there are 633 fish species in the Arctic Ocean and Adjacent Seas (AOAS), of which only 58 are currently exploited by reason of environmental constraints but more might be added in the near future, which would increase the pressure on the environment;
- F. whereas the flora and fauna of the Arctic are common goods;
- G. whereas applying and respecting the rules and objectives of the common fisheries policy should be one of the most important aims for the EU Member States having territory in the Arctic region; whereas, additionally, the quantitative target of restoring and maintaining stocks above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield should be part of any evaluation concerning the marine environment and fisheries in the region;
- H. whereas any fisheries activity in the Arctic region must take place in compliance with the existing international agreements regulating the area, including the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920 and, specifically, any rights of States Parties to that treaty, and also in compliance with any historical fishing rights;
- I. whereas the specific nature of the Arctic region means that it is of the utmost importance that any development of commercial fisheries is based on the best available scientific advice and that monitoring and follow-up are carried out in a way that is commensurate with those aims;
- J. whereas the Arctic region has a particular biodiversity ecosystem and a great variety of habitats, which without further analysis and studies we cannot fully understand; whereas

there are species which have been studied too little to permit full understanding of how their stocks adapt to climate change and recover for commercial fisheries;

- K. whereas the opening of commercial fisheries in a new region such as the Arctic may present opportunities for fisheries products to enter the EU with incorrect labelling or declaration of origin, either directly or under third parties' free trade arrangements;
 - L. whereas the Strategic Plan for Biological Diversity 2011-2020, including Target 11, adopted by the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the 2016 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda, Goal 14, aim to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, including the target of protecting 10 % of marine areas by 2020; whereas the Parties to the CBD have recognised 77 Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) and 13 Super EBSAs that need particular precautionary management;
 - M. whereas exploitation in a region like the Arctic should be carried out in a sustainable fashion based on the precautionary approach;
 - N. whereas the Arctic countries should consider creating in the future a specific regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) and marine protected areas (MPAs), following the models already in place;
 - O. whereas the Galway Statement on Atlantic Ocean Cooperation represents a joint commitment by the EU, Canada and the US, inter alia to building a capacity to understand and predict major Atlantic and Arctic processes, as well as the changes and risks they may entail in relation to human activities and climate change;
 - P. whereas institutions such as the European Marine Board, the European Polar Board and EurOcean are continually studying and disseminating information about the Arctic;
 - Q. whereas Articles 4 and 5 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Paris Agreement) require parties to sustainably manage and take action to conserve sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases, including the oceans;
1. Recalls that Arctic changes have worldwide implications, particularly in view of the fact that adverse effects of global warming occur at a much faster pace in this vulnerable environment;
 2. Calls for any development of commercial fisheries in the Arctic region to be carried out in a way that is fully compatible with the sensitive and specific nature of the region; insists that before any new commercial fisheries are started in the Arctic region, reliable and precautionary scientific stock assessments must be conducted in order to determine the levels of fishing that will conserve the targeted fish stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield and not lead to depletion of other species or to serious damage to the marine environment; stresses that all fishing on the high seas must be regulated by a regional fisheries management organisation that respects scientific advice and has a robust control and surveillance programme to ensure compliance with management measures; points out that fishing within Exclusive Economic Zones must meet the same standards; calls for a moratorium on industrial-scale fishing, including bottom trawling, in the previously unfished waters of the Arctic;

3. Welcomes the ongoing negotiations on an international agreement between the Arctic coastal states and international parties with the aim of preventing unregulated fishing in the international waters of the Arctic, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to sign this declaration and to advocate making it binding on the signatories;
4. Calls on the Commission to support and encourage the Arctic countries to further work on extending the information and analysis available regarding all stocks in the region;
5. Recalls that the rights to land and natural resources are an important part of the culture and survival of indigenous peoples in the Arctic and are vital to protect their traditional way of life;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote and support the establishment of a marine protected area in the Arctic High Seas under the mandate of the OSPAR Commission, prohibiting all extractive uses, including fisheries, in the international waters around the North Pole covered by OSPAR;
7. Calls on the Commission to support initiatives to ban the use of bottom trawling in EBSAs and on the Arctic high seas;
8. Calls for the conservation targets of the new common fisheries policy and the quantitative target of restoring and maintaining stocks above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield to be the basis for any commercial fisheries in the region;
9. Notes that Arctic marine ecosystems are crucial for the preservation of global biodiversity; considers that the reduction of Arctic sea ice and other environmental changes in the Arctic, combined with the limited nature of scientific knowledge about marine resources in this area, necessitate a precautionary approach in order to establish appropriate international measures to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of resources on the Arctic high seas;
10. Advocates strongly that any further development of commercial fisheries in the Arctic region must take place in compliance with international agreements relating to the area, including the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920, with the rights of any States Parties to such agreements, and with existing historical fishing rights;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the new UN ocean agreement for the protection of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) is strong and effective and can ensure a robust process for the identification, designation, management and enforcement of marine protected areas, including no-take marine reserves;
12. Calls on the EU to be a leader in the prevention of unregulated fishing in the Arctic; takes the view that it would have every right to do so, given that Member States are involved in all levels of governance in the Arctic region;
13. Highlights that marine protected areas are critically important for preserving Arctic ecosystems; recalls the need to fully involve local communities in the planning, realisation and management of such protected areas;

14. Supports the position that any development of commercial fishing must be carried out in compliance with all international agreements, including UNCLOS and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA);
15. Calls on the Commission to continue and reinforce the use of Horizon 2020 and other funding programmes for purposes of studying the Arctic;
16. Calls on the Commission to ensure that sufficient scientific advice is available to support any steps to develop commercial fisheries in the Arctic region and that the necessary monitoring and follow-up measures are in place;
17. Points to the importance of the July 2015 declaration on fishing in the Arctic, signed by the five Arctic coastal states;
18. Calls on the Commission to monitor closely any fisheries products made available on the internal market originating from the Arctic region, to ensure that they comply fully with existing European legislation, particularly labelling rules;
19. Points to the importance of cohesion policy and to the need for more effective EU funding in these fields.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	5.12.2016
Result of final vote	+: 22 -: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Richard Corbett, Linnéa Engström, Carlos Iturgaiz, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Ulrike Rodust, Remo Sernagiotto, Isabelle Thomas, Ruža Tomašić, Peter van Dalen, Jarosław Wałęsa
Substitutes present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, José Blanco López, Ole Christensen, Ian Duncan, Anja Hazekamp, Maria Heubuch, Mike Hookem, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Francisco José Millán Mon, Piernicola Pedicini, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez