

Thursday 19 February 2009

Community action in relation to whaling

P6_TA(2009)0067

European Parliament resolution of 19 February 2009 on Community action in relation to whaling (2008/2101(INI))

(2010/C 76 E/09)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling and the establishment of the International Whaling Commission (IWC),
- having regard to the IWC's agreement on zero catch limits (the 'moratorium') for commercial whaling that came into effect in 1986,
- having regard to the Cetacean update of the 2008 Red List of Threatened Species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature,
- having regard to the meeting of the International Union for Conservation of Nature in Barcelona, 5-14 October 2008,
- having regard to Articles 37 and 175 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 19 December 2007 on Community action in relation to whaling (COM(2007)0823),
- having regard to the decision adopted by the Council on 5 June 2008 establishing a Community position on whaling ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the establishment by the IWC at its 60th annual meeting in Santiago, Chile, in June 2008, of a Small Working Group on the future of the IWC (the 'Working Group'),
- having regard to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ⁽²⁾ (the Habitats Directive),
- having regard to the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union - Protocol on protection and welfare of animals,
- having regard to the adoption by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and its implementation by the EU of a ban on international commercial trade in the products of all species of great whales,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A6-0025/2009),

⁽¹⁾ Council Decision establishing the position to be adopted on behalf of the European Community at the 60th meeting of the IWC in 2008 with regard to proposals for amendments to the Schedule of the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling (Council document No 9818/2008).

⁽²⁾ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

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- A. whereas the primary objective must be the protection of biodiversity, including the conservation of species,
- B. whereas animal welfare must always be taken into consideration,
- C. whereas there are, nonetheless, issues of food security and supply, particularly for communities that have traditionally engaged in whaling,
- D. whereas the 'deliberate disturbance, capture or killing' of all whale species is currently prohibited in Community waters under the Habitats Directive,
- E. whereas almost one in four cetacean species are currently regarded as under threat, with nine species listed as either endangered or critically endangered, and the status of many species and populations remains unclear,
- F. whereas, although some whale populations have achieved some degree of recovery since the introduction of the moratorium, others have not and their ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions remains unknown,
- G. whereas the moratorium was originally intended to last until an adequate management scheme was put in place and to allow adequate time for depleted stocks to recover,
- H. whereas not all members of the IWC subscribe to the moratorium,
- I. whereas the moratorium does not, in any event, cover the killing of whales for scientific purposes,
- J. whereas the number of whales killed under Special Permit has actually increased since the introduction of the moratorium,
- K. whereas the IWC (in over 30 resolutions) and a number of NGOs and other bodies have expressed deep concern that current Special Permit whaling is 'contrary to the spirit of the moratorium on commercial whaling' (IWC2003-2); the meat from such whaling should not be used for commercial purposes,
- L. whereas, despite recent improvements, the methods by which whales are killed still fall short of the desired standard,
- M. whereas cetaceans are endangered not only by hunting but also by climate change, pollution, ship strikes, fishing gear, sonar and other hazards,
- N. whereas the above-mentioned Council decision relied only on Article 175 of the EC Treaty and related only to the above-mentioned meeting of the IWC in Santiago, Chile, in June 2008,
 - 1. Warmly welcomes the above-mentioned Commission Communication on Community action in relation to whaling and the decision on whaling, which was adopted by qualified majority at the Council; and supports the maintenance of the global moratorium on commercial whaling and a ban on international commercial trade in whale products; seeks to end 'scientific whaling' and supports the designation of substantial regions of ocean and seas as sanctuaries in which all whaling is indefinitely prohibited;
 - 2. Calls on the Council to adopt a new common position under Article 37 as well as Article 175 of the EC Treaty;

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3. Believes that the conservation of whales and other cetaceans depends ultimately on the development of measures that are the subject of sufficiently broad agreement to be implemented effectively;
 4. Calls on the Council, the Commission and those Member States participating in the Working Group to work toward the achievement of such an agreement;
 5. Believes that discussions in the Working Group should be the subject of the greatest possible transparency;
 6. Hopes that the Working Group will address the issue of lethal whaling for scientific purposes in order to find a basis for eliminating it;
 7. Respects the need for a limited amount of hunting to be done by those traditionally engaged in it for the purposes of sustenance, but calls for much greater emphasis on research into and the employment of humane killing methods;
 8. Calls for any such hunting to take place only with clear quotas based on the advice of the IWC Scientific Committee and regulated under strict controls incorporating full recording and reporting to the IWC;
 9. Calls also for the establishment, in suitable locations around the world, of more Marine Protected Areas in which whales would receive special protection;
 10. Notes that the Habitats Directive, which defines the Community position with respect to whales (and dolphins), would not allow the resumption of commercial whaling in respect of any stock of whales in EU waters;
 11. Draws attention to the need to use more selective fishing gear to avoid by-catches of other species, particularly cetaceans;
 12. Considers that the tragic history of commercial whaling, combined with the numerous threats currently faced by whale populations (including, inter alia, incidental catches in fishing operations, collisions with vessels, global climate change and ocean noise pollution), dictates that the EU must promote, in key international fora, in a coordinated and coherent way, the highest level of protection for whales at a global level;
 13. Calls also for threats to the cetacean population arising from climate change, pollution, ship strikes, fishing gear, anthropogenic ocean noise (including sonar, seismic surveys and vessel noise) and other hazards to be tackled outside such protected areas;
 14. Considers that the Commission should, in advance of global action, bring forward further proposals to counter such threats in respect of Community waters and Community vessels;
 15. Takes the view that the Commission should define a revised regulatory framework for the practice of whale-watching that protects the economic and social interests of coastal regions where this activity is carried out, taking account of its recent development;
 16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the International Whaling Commission, the Regional Advisory Councils, the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to which the EU belongs.
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