During such visits will suspect companies also be inspected, or just the local veterinary authorities?

If suspicions prove to be well-founded, what action can be taken at borders in order to halt deliveries of fish?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(24 November 1999)

The border inspection posts in Member States check, amongst other things, whether imported fish for human consumption comes from an authorised third country and from an approved establishment. Community inspections are directed at the ability of the competent authorities to guarantee compliance with Community standards.

Regarding the imports from Russia, Poland and Estonia, the Commission informed the authorities in these countries of the alleged irregularities. It requested these authorities to investigate this matter and to inform the Commission by 15 December 1999 of the possible actions undertaken to stop these practices.

A mission took place in Poland in September 1999. Estonia was visited in July 1998. The latest information that the Commission has is that the problem in these countries has been contained. No mission was undertaken to Russia recently. However, because of its importance, this issue was raised in the Community-Russia co-operation committee on 8 October 1999. Depending on the information provided by the Russian authorities, the Commission might consider a mission. In Poland some establishments approved for export to the Community were visited. The suspected establishments are not approved for export of fishery products to the Community.

Under Community legislation it is the responsibility of the Member State to check that the imports originate from approved establishments and to decide the final destination of fish found not to be in conformity with Community legislation. Therefore the Commission requested the German and Austrian authorities to investigate these matters and to alert their border inspection posts in order to avoid illegal imports.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1810/99

by Mihail Papayannakis (GUE/NGL) to the Commission

(12 October 1999)

Subject: Protection of the conservation area of Kyriotissa

The area of Kyriotissa in Veroia has been declared by the Ministry of Culture and the Fourth Inspectorate of Monuments (Greek Government Gazette 468B, 9 May 1980) as an historic site owing to its unique Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches and the traditional architecture of its houses.

However, despite the fact that the area has been designated an historic site and the Local Archaeological Council has prohibited any activities which are not considered to be compatible with its status, licences have been granted in Kyriotissa to operate businesses such as bars, clubs and restaurants. I have, moreover, received complaints from the inhabitants of Kyriotissa protesting against the disruption of the conservation area (noise pollution, refuse, car-parking on pavements, establishments open in the early hours of the night), resources for the improvement of which were made available from the Second CSF.

Given that the Commission has also partly funded the project, will it say:

1. whether it intends to examine whether there has been any change in the conditions of the contract under which the Ministry of the Environment, Regional Planning and Public Works incorporated the project for the protection and development of the Barbouta-Kyriotissa conservation area in the CSF and, in particular, measure 4.3 of the Operational Programme for the environment;
2. in what way it will intercede with the Greek authorities to persuade them not to grant further licences for the operation of such businesses and to review existing licences with a view to designating the area as residential only, and

3. what its views are of the possibility of support, through the Third CSF, for initiatives to improve the area further, including restoring its houses in their original style?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(22 November 1999)

The Community part-financed a project aiming to protect and restore the old listed districts of Kyriotissa and Barbouta in Veria (Northern Greece), under the 'Environment' operational programme (OP) of the Community support framework (CSF) for Greece for the current programming period (1994-1999).

The project, which has now been finished, consisted of restoring the declining urban environment, mainly by resurfacing roads using cobblestones and slate, planting trees, improving small squares, lighting streets and similar measures. The total cost was about € 1.2 million.

1. In most cases, methods of implementation are the subject of an agreement between local and national authorities, the latter represented in this case by the Department of the Environment. The Commission does not intervene in decisions on content, provided Community and national law are respected. There is no direct causal link between this agreement and inclusion of the project in the OP.

2. The granting of licences for commercial establishments is a matter solely for the national authorities.

3. As the draft CSF for Greece for the next programming period (2000-2006) has only just reached the Commission, it is too soon to say which projects it will comprise.

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1812/99

by Carlos Carnero González (PSE) to the Council

(11 October 1999)

Subject: Repressive action taken by the Moroccan authorities in the Western Sahara

The Polisario Front and various other bodies have drawn the attention of the UN Secretary-General and international public opinion to violent acts of repression perpetrated in September by the Moroccan authorities in the town of El Aaiún (Western Sahara) during a peaceful demonstration organised by the workers of the Fos Bucraa company, out-of-work graduates and students against the occupation of the territory and in support of specific demands. As a result of those acts of violence, one person died, forty were injured and dozens disappeared.

Would the Council not agree that, in view of the undertakings that Morocco has given to the international community, such action is not in accordance with the behaviour expected of that country during the preparations for the referendum on self-determination?

Does it intend to protest to the Moroccan Government and demand that those responsible be identified and that there be no repetition of such behaviour in the future?

Does it intend to call on the Moroccan authorities to ensure full respect for the right of free expression and the right to demonstrate of the citizens of the Western Sahara?