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## **The new Common Fisheries Policy: making things simpler**

Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Meeting on Common Fisheries Policy at the EC Representation

**Berlin, 17 March 2011**

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is really a pleasure to be able to meet you all here in Berlin. I am looking forward to the conference on the Arctic, where I am to speak later today.

In my address I will show that the Union is determined to enhance cooperation with all our Arctic partners and keep an open dialogue with the local communities. This is why we asked to become permanent observers at the Arctic Council. I will show that our input into Arctic research and maritime policy can be a helpful tool for sustainable development in the Arctic region.

Right now, however, I would rather take this opportunity to address another, equally pressing topic: the upcoming reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

I am determined to make our policy greener, simpler and leaner, more modern and consistent with the international standards we have signed up to. All of these elements are important to Germany. But since Germany is a net payer to the EU budget I am especially counting on this country's support to make this policy leaner, because leaner will mean it has to become cheaper. We owe this to our taxpayers.

For me leaner means under the new co-decision system we can no longer afford to legislate on every single technical detail;

Time has come to admit that our policy has gotten too complicated, too detailed and too distant from the final users;

And let's face it: perhaps for these very reasons, our policy has not delivered; progress towards sustainable fisheries has been slow, too slow, up to now.

So, we need to enhance the aspect of decentralised decision-making. Issues that are merely technical do not belong to the political level. Besides, Member States are not children and the EU should be no baby sitter.

On the contrary, what the EU should do is lay down the main objectives, fix the overall standards and prescribe the general principles.

It would then be up to Member States to choose the mix of measures that best achieves those EU objectives in each region or sea basin.

Needless to say, to be effective and fair vis-à-vis the sector, this common "mix" would have to be jointly agreed and implemented by all the States sharing a common resource. We have a good example of this kind of voluntary cooperation in the Baltic Sea, where the regional strategy is particularly advanced.

We also have to switch to a sustainable exploitation of our seas and to an ecosystem-based approach to fishing.

For me an ecosystem-based can only mean one thing; we have to get back to healthy stocks; we have to protect threatened species and vulnerable habitats; and we have to stop discarding.

My recent meetings with ministers and MEPs gave an encouraging sign that we all want to find a solution to this problem and I am very grateful for the support I received from Germany. I know full well that a ban is not going to be easy and I can promise you that it will not come over night. To the contrary I also want to hear the views of the fishing industry and other stakeholders and I am organizing a meeting with them on 3 May in Brussels.

I am sure that, together, we can work out a system, which builds on experience and which, with the right incentives and disincentives, can get rid of a problem that has been inherent to the CFP for too long.

This will be a political choice that directly impacts on the credibility of the reform and of the future CFP.

Now let us turn to the new market policy we are developing.

I would like producer organisations to actively manage resources by preparing and implementing sustainable fishing plans and planning and steering market demand. The "market observatory" we plan to put up will provide the industry with regular, up-to-date information on which to base their marketing strategies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Individually tradable quotas or ITQs have reduced overcapacity, increased profits and given the sector better stability for long-term planning in a number of Member States. ITQs would not be property, but user rights, because the resource remains a public good. They do not clash, therefore, with the German legal system.

Fishermen who want to leave the sector could sell their user right at the end of their career.

Let me also make clear that we want to limit transferability to the national level, in order to keep relative stability intact. Selling and buying nationally would contribute to reducing fleet capacity, without affecting the quota assigned to the Member State.

This means the future fisheries funds can focus on smart, green, inclusive and sustainable growth instead. That should be no cause of concern for Germany, because it is a road which goes through innovation, technique, science and know-how: all things at which this country excels.

One thing is certain at this stage: the future financial instrument will only support projects that contribute to the objectives of the new CFP and to the EU 2020 agenda. We will have one single fund for scientific needs, governance expenditures (such as regional councils and advisory organisations) and also control and enforcement.

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, we will prepare an ambitious proposal for a wholesome reform.

We need healthy stocks to generate income for fishermen and give stability to the sector.

We need healthy stocks to give employment and economic spin-offs to our coastal communities.

We need healthy stocks to make sure our children don't pay for our mistakes some day.

I know you agree with me. This country is not only a strong force in EU fisheries, with interests in more than one sea basin. It also has a steady, long-standing tradition of advocating greener policies.

Don't stop now. I count on your support to make a difference and change the face of European fisheries for the better.

Thank you