



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

**REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,  
FORESTRY AND FOOD**

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PROMOTION  
SERVICE

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**ADDRESS BY MINISTER IZTOK JARC,  
PRESIDENT OF THE EU COUNCIL FOR AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES,  
BEFORE THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES  
Check against delivery!**

Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is a great honour for me, as a representative of the first of the "young Member States" to assume the Presidency, to be here today to present our work programme.

In doing so, I wish to underline the importance that I and the Slovenian Presidency attach to the constructive role which the European Parliament, and your Committee in particular, plays in the legislative process for the fisheries sector. I look forward to working closely with you to ensure smooth progress on the proposals currently before us.

Now that the Reform Treaty has been signed, this cooperation will be even more important in future years, given the move in the Treaty to co-decision for most fisheries matters.

Before going into the details of the Presidency programme, I would like to thank my predecessor, Jaime Silva, for his excellent work. He managed not only to achieve agreement on three TAC and Quota proposals but also found time to reach agreement on the multi-annual recovery plan for tuna and on data collection.

My thanks to him for this!

**Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing**

We plan to have fisheries items on the Council agenda in April and June.

My main priority will be fight against the Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU).

This is a tough target, given the many difficult issues involved, but one that I think is realistic.

Some of the most difficult issues are likely to revolve around sanctions. Sanctions are always sensitive for Member States. However, having appropriate sanctions is important if they are to be effective in the law enforcement process. I anticipate that this is one of the elements that we will need to address at the political level, as there will be important matters of principle at stake.



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Trade and port access measures will be equally important. The success of the NEAFC<sup>1</sup> port state control scheme in combating IUU cod from the Barents Sea is to be warmly welcomed. Not only does it give us a template for the future, but it also indicates that this is a fight that we can win. The key to success will be to work together.

We have to accept, however, that this fight will be a bit like cutting off the Hydra's heads. However, just as Hercules used his imagination in burning off the new heads, the key to this knotty problem may lie in our using all the tools at our disposal. One key tool is the power and thinking of the market.

Nobody respectable approves of trading in stolen or illegal goods. If we are smart we can use this. We can work with the processors, the supermarkets and the consumers. We can harness their power to make sure that IUU fish are not sold on the market. There is not much point in stealing something if you cannot sell it later.

The Community can make the difference here. One fish in four in the whole world is sold inside our borders. We are the biggest market for fish on the planet. This gives us real clout - and we should use it! We have the ability to go out and influence the world market as a consumer. Then we can persuade the rest of the world to follow our example. That is leadership!

Part of leadership is listening to others. Many ministers from developing countries at the IUU Conference in Lisbon last October stressed that they would need help in meeting the range of obligations they would face. I have taken this on board, and we will have to see how we can address these concerns.

Your views on this debate will be important, so I look forward to hearing your opinions on this subject in time for the June Council.

### **Destructive fishing practices**

The other key proposal on the table is the proposed Regulation on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas from the adverse impacts of bottom fishing gears. This seeks to implement UN General Assembly Resolution 61/105.

Some people have said that "bottom trawling in the sea is like hunting for deer by tearing down the forest". Living in a country covered by forests, the graphic quality of this image is one I can certainly relate to. Wanton destruction of natural habitats is not something any of us would aspire to. I would hate to think what Slovenia would look like if we tore down all the forests.

On the other hand, fishermen have to earn a living, so we need to find a balance. I think the proposal in front of us does that. I am aware that this is a sensitive issue for certain Member States, but I am confident we can come to an agreement on this in June, well in time for the UN deadline of the end of this year. I look forward to your views.

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<sup>1</sup> North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission



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I have two main themes for the other issues that we plan to address.

### **Sustainability and conservation**

The first is to continue the long-term work on sustainability and conservation. Like many things in life, this can be a question of three steps forward, two steps back. That certainly seems to be the case for cod.

We are seeing the first green shoots of recovery for cod in the North Sea. The issue now is how to protect these shoots so that they can grow while still ensuring the livelihood of our fishermen. We will need to discuss this on the basis of an amended cod recovery plan. I am sure the debate will be heated, as cod has become in many ways the symbol of the Common Fisheries Policy, at least in many of the northern countries. Changing perceptions is never easy, and it is still way too early to take any recovery for granted.

I hope to have a rigorous and fruitful policy debate on this plan with my colleagues, if possible at the April Council.

We may have a second helping of cod in the Spring - this time from the Baltic Sea. Although it is from the Baltic, the issue will be of interest to nearly all Member States, as it concerns "payback" for over-fishing in the Baltic in 2007.

"Payback" has become one of the hot topics in the Council. It reflects the need for equal treatment between Member States and a level playing field for control. I am sure that Member States that are already paying back now or will be obliged to do so in the future will examine the issue with a beady eye. That the Baltic States have a direct interest goes without saying.

However, we will have to wait and see what the Commission actually proposes.

It also possible that our April menu will include herring from the West of Scotland, where I may be having an exchange of views with my colleagues on the long-term management plan. If you have finished your deliberations and given your opinion, then I would also like, if possible, to reach political agreement on this at the June Council.

Moving closer to home - my home at least, the Commission has indicated that it would like to amend the Mediterranean Regulation. This is to incorporate measures agreed by the GFCM<sup>2</sup> and to amend the transitional measures.

This sounds simple enough, although life rarely seems to be simple when it comes to the Mediterranean. If we have your opinion in time, then, being a Mediterranean country, it would give me great pleasure to reach political agreement on this at the June Council.

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<sup>2</sup> General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean



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## **Simplification**

The other main theme for my work will be simplification. Simplifying and modernising legislation was one of the areas highlighted in the 18-month programme of the German, Portuguese and Slovenian presidencies.<sup>3</sup>

Our aim is to agree on two proposals. The first is on authorising the Commission to approve modifications to protocols of fisheries partnership agreements concluded between the Community and third countries. While this proposal aims to streamline the decision-making process, it also has implications both for you in the Parliament and for

us in the Council. I look forward to hearing your views on this proposal, which will be of substantial help to the Council for taking decisions and for further work on this proposal and for its adoption.

The other proposal concerns authorisations for fishing activities. Not as simple as it sounds. Indeed there were a lot of comments, and a lot of doubts were voiced on this issue in the Council at the working party level when this was first discussed. The Commission is reflecting and may come back with some revised ideas.

Even then, I anticipate a lot of hard work going through the detail article by article. Nonetheless, I hope we can reach political agreement on this at the June Council, and I look forward to your contribution.

Before then, we will be holding our usual six-monthly review of the simplification process at our April Council meeting.

## **External agreements**

There are also important items on the external side to which we will be devoting our attention.

Firstly, on Monday the Council discussed the state of play of the implementation of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement with Mauritania. This is a highly sensitive item within

the Community and for Mauritania, as the money from the Agreement forms a considerable part of their budget. On the other hand, the Member States want value for the money from this agreement. This is an issue that has to balance the interests of fishermen seeking continuity in fishing opportunities, development issues for Mauritania and sound financial management of the Community budget.

On Monday, Commissioner Borg gave us an exhaustive report on the discussions which are currently taking place with the representatives of the Mauritanian government aimed at reaching a common agreement for the modifications of the Protocol of this fisheries agreement.

My colleagues and I have all welcomed the Commission's endeavours to find a solution for this issue within the coming weeks in negotiations with Mauritania and thus avoid taking drastic measures, as it is a denouncement of the Protocol.

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<sup>3</sup> doc 17079/06 POLGEN 125, page 50, paragraph 103.



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Permit me to shift your attention from Mauritania to relations with our fishing partners in the Mediterranean. In this regard I would like to stress that the GFCM will continue its progress in developing and implementing management measures for the Mediterranean.

While it may not be obvious at first sight, I believe the GFCM has a very important role to play in promoting intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean. This is because it provides a forum for countries with very different cultures but a common history to come together, talk and take decisions on fisheries.

As we know from our own experience in the Community, it can be by taking decisions on nitty-gritty practical issues that true intercultural dialogue can take place. Given that intercultural dialogue is an overarching priority of the Slovenian Presidency and that we are a Mediterranean country, we attach particular importance to the annual meeting in Rome next month.

### **Conclusion**

In concluding, Mr Chairman, I would like to draw your attention to one area I have not touched on so far - aquaculture. It is a simple fact that we will have another two and a half billion mouths to feed between now and 2050. Fish will be part of what they eat and the oceans will not be able to provide all of what we need. Aquaculture will have to be part of the mix.

That's why I will be holding a ministerial conference in Slovenia at the end of June which will focus on the future of European aquaculture and possibilities for its development. I warmly invite you, Mr Chairman, to join us in our deliberations. I for one will be raising the issue of cormorants, which is a big issue in my country.

I look forward to working with you over the next six months to bring forward the considerable legislative agenda before us.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Chairman, I am happy to take any questions you might have.