

Statement by Hans-Dietrich Genscher on the common fisheries policy (Strasbourg, 8 February 1983)

Caption: On 8 February 1983, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher gave a speech to the European Parliament welcoming the agreement setting out the common fisheries policy.

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Ladies and gentlemen, any extension to the edifice that is the European Community is a great event for Europe. The common fisheries policy which the Fisheries Ministers adopted on 25 January joins the common agricultural policy as the second area in which a whole sector of the economy is governed by a uniform legal framework in all the Member States. The satisfactory outcome of the negotiations was not achieved without sacrifices. All the Member States concerned have had to moderate their claims and demands, but the sacrifices made by individual countries are offset by the advantages they will all derive from this Community arrangement.

Speaking as President of the Council in this forum, I should like once again to thank all those who have been involved in the work on this compromise. My thanks also go to all the representatives of the Commission and Member States who paved the way for this compromise in more than seven years of negotiations. I would refer in this context to both Commissioner Kontogeorgis and his predecessor, Mr Gundelach, who was long involved in these negotiations. I should also like to thank the President of the Commission, Mr Thorn, my colleague and Foreign Minister Mr Ellemann-Jensen and the Secretary-General of the Council.

Together we succeeded in surmounting the final obstacles and, in three rounds of intensive talks in January, in completing a package that had already been generally tied up and so enabling all the Fisheries Ministers to agree. The European Parliament will be aware that this was not an easy decision for the United Kingdom, Ireland, France or Germany to take. Nonetheless, we have created the 'blue Europe'.

As with other Community policies, this does not mean, of course, that we can now assign this area to the files. The fisheries policy too must and will evolve. The most important step has been taken. The signing of the documents does not, however, signify the immediate restoration of the fish stocks of yesteryear or the renaissance of the great fishing fleets in which many Community fishermen once made their living.

The new Community legislation will, however, permit the careful management of fish stocks. There is room for hope that in a few years' time there will again be enough herring and mackerel in the North Sea to give fishermen secure incomes and European consumers a cheap supply of fish. The planned structural measures, for which 250m ECU has been set aside for a three-year period, will also help to safeguard the future of European fishermen. The plan is to modernize fleets, to finance research voyages and to support aquaculture projects. We shall also be paying out laying-up premiums, and this will be unavoidable for some time to come.

The common fisheries policy also forms the basis for relations in the fisheries sector with such other countries as Canada, Norway, Sweden and The Faeroes. There are also agreements with Spain, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and the Republic of Guinea. Other agreements will follow. Another decisive factor - and one which the Presidency considers particularly important - is that we now have a clear basis for the negotiations on the accession of Spain and Portugal where they concern fisheries policy. The fisheries policy has become an *acquis communautaire*.

I should like to thank the European Parliament for the critical interest with which it has followed the negotiations. Parliament has given constant support to these negotiations through the resolutions it has adopted. The Council much appreciates this support. The Community has again shown that, even at economically difficult times, it is capable of making progress in areas in which the Member States have conflicting interests. We feel very confident now that the Community has succeeded in harmonizing what had appeared to be incompatible views.