COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

on the possible developments in fishery relations in 1982 between the EEC, Norway and Sweden

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Following the Council's deliberations at its meeting of 4 october 1982, the Commission has held exploratory talks with Norway within the framework for bilateral EEC-Norway and EEC-Sweden relations and with both Norway and Sweden within the framework for trilateral relations on fishing in the Skagerrak and Kattegat.

The purpose of these talks, which are purely exploratory and consequently not binding, is to search for ways of improving Community access to certain joint stocks in the North Sea or obtaining better terms for the Community in implementation of the fishery agrements between the Community and the States with coastline bounding the above-mentioned regions.

The Commission would remind the Council that it had already held preparatory talks with Norway for this same purpose, in preparation for earlier sessions of the Council ; the conclusions contained in this report thus stem from in-depth talks with the States concerned and represent a solid basis for a realistic assessment of what further catch possibilities the Community might obtain from Norway and Sweden if it could first reach a concensus on the common policy to be applied to the conservation and management of its own fish stocks.

The Commission is pleased to report, in the first place, that an atmosphere of comprehension and cooperation prevailed throughout the talks, confirming that Norway and Sweden are ready to make an active and positive contribution to the Member States' efforts to bring about a common fisheries policy.

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Three categories of subjects were dealt with in these bilateral and trilateral talks :

- bilateral EEC-Norway relations ;
- bilateral EEC-Sweden relations ;
- trilateral EEC-Norway-Sweden relations (Skagerrak - Kattegat).

I. Bilateral EEC-Norway relations

Aware that Norway could not consider granting better terms where several stocks were concerned, either for reasons of a biological nature or because it would be pointless since the stocks concerned were no longer fished at this time of the year, the Commission concentrated on improving the catch possibilities for cod in the North Sea.

In this context the Commission recommended that consideration should be given to a substantial increase (around 15 %) in the TAC, which would mean a further allocation of some 29 750 tonnes for the Community.

Despite all its efforts, the Commission was unable to convince Norway that the TAC should be increased by more than about 6 %. The impression gained from these talks is therefore that Norway would be willing to agree to the TAC being increased from 235 000 to 250 000 t, that is, an increase of 15 000 t in all.

The Commission noted, however, that Norway was prepared to transfer to the Community, on this basis and without demanding any reciprocal concession, its own 17 % share of the said increase. This being the case, the Commission considers that the Community could have available a further 15.000 t of cod, 2 550 t of which would be by way of a "gift".

The Commission would remind the Council that, where Norway is concerned, the extra 15 000 t would be available only if the Council adopted the Community on the common fisheries policy as a whole. Otherwise, Norway has made it clear that it would not be prepared to alter the terms of the existing agreement and that no extra cod allocation would therefore be available.

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II. Bilateral EEC-Sweden relations

The Commission noted Sweden's lack of immediate interest in concluding, at what was considered too late a date, an agreement on fishery relations for 1982.

III. Trilateral EEC-Norway-Sweden relations : Fishing in the Skagerrak-Kattegat

In the first place the Commission requested Norway and Sweden to agree that the terms of the arrangement negotiated in February should be altered in respect of the three basic points on which the Danish Delegation had taken a negative stance at the Council meeting of 21 July, namely : the EEC herring quota, the TAC for cod and the organization of the fishing year for sprat. In doing so the Commission was trying to place fishery relations in this region on a normal footing, within a negotiated framework agreeable to all parties concerned.

Norway and Sweden refused to enter into further discussion on the said points ; referring to the conclusions of the Helsinger Conference of 24 August 1982 which was attended by the Norwegian, Swedish and Danish Ministers, they stated bluntly that the provisions of the agreement initialled in February 1982 would no longer be relevant once the fishing years for herring and sprat came to an end (September 1982). Whilst reaffirming their desire to see a strict policy on the conservation of resources in the region concerned and their readiness to conclude, in February 1982, the agreement as negotiated by that date, both delegations felt that it would be unrealistic and inappropriate to sign an agreement covering 1982 in late October ; this being the case, the suggestions put forward by the Community representative could not be taken into consideration in the context of such an agreement.

Given these identical positions, the Commission considers, at this stage in 1982, that the size of the Norwegian contribution towards improving the cod quota in the North Sea is no longer influenced by the conclusion of a new agreement to govern fishing in the Skagerrak-Kattegat.