

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(92)23 final - VOL. I

Brussels, 27 March 1992

PROPOSAL

for a

RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

on a Community programme of policy and
action in relation to the environment and sustainable
development

(presented by the Commission)

VOLUME I

PROPOSAL

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RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

on a Community programme of policy and
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development

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European
Coal and Steel Community,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European
Economic Community,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European
Atomic Community,

Having regard to the draft from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European
Parliament,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social
Committee,

Whereas the Treaty establishing the European Economic
Community, as amended by the Single European Act,
explicitly provides for the development and
implementation of a Community policy on the environment,
and lays down the objectives and principles which should
govern such policy;

Whereas the Treaty lays down that action by the Community relating to the environment shall have the following objectives :

- to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment,
- to contribute towards protecting human health,
- to ensure a prudent and rational utilization of natural resources;

Whereas the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht on 7 February 1992 has as a principal objective the promotion of sustainable growth respecting the environment, includes among the activities of the Union a policy in the sphere of the environment, specifies that this policy must aim at a high level of protection, that environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of other Community policies and that Community policy on the environment must contribute to promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems.

Whereas the Declaration of the Council of the European Communities and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 22 November 1973⁽¹⁾ called for the implementation of a European Communities programme of action on the environment; whereas the action programme was extended and supplemented for the period 1977 to 1992 by the resolutions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 17 May 1977⁽²⁾, of 7 February 1983⁽³⁾ and of 19 October 1987⁽⁴⁾;

(1) OJ N° C 112, 20.12.1973

(2) OJ N° C 139, 13.6.1977

(3) OJ N° C 46, 17.2.1983

(4) OJ N° C 326, 7.12.1987

Whereas the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government, meeting in Council, of 26 June 1990 calls for a further action programme for the environment to be elaborated on the basis of the principles of sustainable development, preventive and precautionary action, and shared responsibility;

Whereas the said Declaration also acknowledges the wider responsibilities of the Community and its Member States, as one of the foremost regional groupings in the world, to play a leading rôle in promoting concerted and effective action at global level, working with other industrialised countries, and assisting developing countries to overcome their special difficulties;

Whereas the Community's credibility and effectiveness at this wider level depends in large measure on the ability to adopt progressive environmental measures for implementation and enforcement by its Member States; and *whereas*, therefore, the internal and external dimensions of Community environment policy are inextricably linked;

Whereas, in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity, many aspects of the policy and specific actions to which the Programme "Towards Sustainability" will give rise fall to be carried out at levels other than those involving the powers, duties and competences of the European Communities.

Whereas the strategy advanced in the Programme relies on satisfactory integration of environment and other relevant policies and on the complementarity of measures and actions at different levels so as to optimise their effectiveness;

ACKNOWLEDGES that the Programme "Towards Sustainability" presented by the Commission follows closely the objectives and principles set out in the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the Community meeting in Council on 26 June 1990 and in the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht on 7 February 1992;

ACKNOWLEDGES that many current forms of activity and development are not environmentally sustainable;

ENDORSES, accordingly, the Programme's general objective of progressively orientating human activity and development towards more sustainable forms;

AGREES that the achievement of sustainable development will require significant changes from current patterns of development, consumption and behaviour;

DECLARES that such changes cannot be achieved without a sharing of responsibility at global, Community, national, regional, local and even personal levels;

Insofar as environment and development within the European Communities are concerned :

NOTES the Report on the State of the Environment which the Commission has published in conjunction with the Programme; notes the positive impact that previous action programmes have made on certain environmental problems; notes that the end of the time-frame of the current action programme on the environment coincides with the completion of the Internal Market;

CONSIDERS, however, that the current measures do not appear to be sufficient to meet the increased pressures on the environment likely to arise in consequence of current and anticipated trends in economic and social activity within the Community, and the political and economic developments in Central and Eastern Europe and at wider international level;

AGREES that a more progressive and better co-ordinated policy and strategy for the environment and sustainable development is called for;

ENDORSES the strategy of tackling key sectors in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner and agrees that because of their impact and importance throughout the Community special attention should be directed towards the industry, energy, transport, agriculture and tourism sectors;

AGREES that involvement of all levels of society in a spirit of shared responsibility will require a deepening and broadening of the range of instruments to complement normative legislation including, in particular,

- market-based instruments, including economic and fiscal incentives;
- information, education and training;
- financial support mechanisms;

NOTES the objectives, targets, actions and time-frames indicated in the Programme; and considers that they offer a sound basis for moving towards sustainable development;

NOTES, that sustainability of activity and development will not be attained within the life-span of this Programme and, consequently, that further, still more progressive measures will probably be necessary beyond the year 2000 in order to hand on the environment to the next generation in a fit state to maintain public health and social and economic welfare at a high level;

NOTES, also, that while many of the measures and actions are set within a time-frame which extends to 2000, and even beyond, it is intended to undertake a review of the Programme before the end of 1995;

CONSIDERS that in order to ensure that Community measures on the environment are more effectively implemented, cooperation procedures between the Commission and the Member States should be further improved.

Insofar as environment and development at wider international level are concerned,

ASSERTS that the Communities will contribute actively and positively to the successful negotiation and implementation of global strategies to deal with such problems and issues as climate change, deforestation, biodiversity and energy and to programmes of sustainable development particularly in the developing countries and in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the framework of their co-operation and association agreements;

NOTES that many of the internal Community measures in the Programme are designed to reduce wasteful consumption of resources and, thereby, will contribute to greater efficiency in resource management at wider international level;

LOOKS to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to provide a framework for the promotion of policies and programmes designed to improve the quality of human life worldwide through more equitable distribution of natural resources, alleviation of poverty, food security and improved health standards and life expectancy;

and, in the light of the foregoing

SUBSCRIBES to the necessity for a programme of policy and action in relation to the environment designed to achieve a sustainable development path;

APPROVES the general approach and strategy of the Programme "Towards Sustainability" presented by the Commission;

INVITES the Commission to come forward with appropriate proposals to give effect to the Programme insofar as it pertains to action at Community level;

UNDERTAKES to decide on proposals submitted by the Commission as expeditiously as possible so as to respect the relevant objectives, targets and time-frames set out in the Programme;

CALLS on all Community institutions, Member States, enterprise and citizens to accept their relative responsibilities to protect the environment for this and future generations and to play their full part in implementing this Programme.