Barcelona Convention: New Protocols and Amendments

The European Parliament has approved the Commission’s proposals (consultation procedure, without a report) concerning EU Council Decisions on the conclusion of Protocols and amendments to the Barcelona Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution.

Since signing the Convention in 1977, the EU has brought forward numerous Protocols aimed at strengthening the prevention of marine pollution. In the context of the revision and improvement of the legal provisions of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), the contracting parties adopted a new Protocol to the Barcelona Convention in 1995, signed by 16 Mediterranean countries and the Community; this Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean, replaces an existing Protocol.

The Commission has therefore proposed that the Council approve this revised Protocol and its Annexes covering areas of Community responsibility on the environment.

The amendments included in the revised Protocol are designed to strengthen protection and improve the natural and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean through the designation of specially protected areas and the tightening of conservation measures for endangered species. The text also aims to protect natural habitats and maintain biological diversity in the long term.

The new Protocol includes an Annex covering common criteria for the choice of protected marine and coastal areas, and another concerning endangered species and those whose exploitation should be regulated.

The EU’s endorsement of the text will be accompanied by a specific declaration, specifying that the EU is participating in the implementation of provisions outlined in Annexes to the Protocol through the creation of the Natura 2000 network.

The Commission proposes (COM(99)28), that on behalf of the Union the Council should endorse amendments to the Protocol on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Marine Pollution. The proposed changes aim primarily to strengthen protection against pollution from land-based sources and introduce preventative measures – for example, regarding the discharge of untreated domestic and industrial waste containing toxic and persistent substances liable to bio-accumulate.

The new Protocol also contains programmes and measures aimed at addressing pollution from certain land-based sources and activities listed in an Annex.

The Commission further proposes (COM(99)29), that the Council adopt a Decision endorsing the amendments and modifications to the Protocol regarding the prevention and reduction of pollution caused by discharges from ships and aircraft.

REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

UN: Human Development Report

– Tax on Internet Access
  The UN Human Development Report sees the lack of internet access as exacerbating inequalities. It gives as an example that it costs $75 and takes five days to send a 40-page document from Madagascar to the Côte d’Ivoire, and it costs $45 and takes half an hour to fax it. However, it costs around 20 cents and takes two minutes to send it by e-mail, which can go to thousands of people at no extra cost.

  It calls for a tax on information sent through the internet, with the proceeds used to help provide expensive equipment in poor countries. With rapid growth of the internet, a very small tax could still raise sums far in excess of the world’s rich countries’ official aid budgets.

– Gender Inequality
  According to statistics gathered for the report, gender inequality remains a fact of life in every society in the world. The index of human development is lower for women that for men in all UN countries without exception.

– International Codes of Conduct
  Multinationals are too dominant in the world economy for voluntary codes of conduct to be enough, the report says. International codes of conduct should also be developed for banks and other financial institutions, covering secrecy and risk assessment.

(Montreal Protocol

– 19th Meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group
  Representatives discussed strengthening rules that govern the use of ozone-depleting substances and considered national efforts to eliminate those chemicals.

The Working Group also reviewed the assessment reports of the Protocol’s three panels on science, environmental effects, and technology and economics; and considered adjustments and amendments of the phase-out schedules proposed by the European Community.

Very little of a concrete nature was achieved, and decisions have been postponed to the next meeting of the Group in September.

ECOSOC: Emphasis on Core Duties

Francesco Paolo Fulci (Italy), President of the Economic and Social Council, said at the end of April that efforts were being made to instil new life into the Council with the effective implementation of the provisions of Article 65 of the Charter. That Article states that the Economic and Social Council may furnish information to the Security Council and also assist it upon request.

Mr. Fulci said efforts were being made to transform ECOSOC from being a “mini-General Assembly” into what it was originally meant to do – to cope with the social and economic problems of States and with human rights.

He also said that it had been decided that a 10-point manifesto should be prepared which outlined what the Economic and Social Council believed should be a strategy to eradicate poverty from the world. It would be based on all the documents adopted by the various UN conferences. “Our hope is that its message, which should be written in clear words, would be adopted at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council July session in Geneva,” he said.

(EPL will report on the July session in the next issue)

Meeting between ECOSOC and Bretton Woods Institutions

The theme of the meeting was the functioning of international financial markets and stability in financing for development.

Solid cooperation with the international financial institutions was essential for making ECOSOC truly action and results-oriented, the President of the Council said.