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## Fisheries Council moves forward on sustainability agenda

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### Fisheries Council moves forward on sustainability agenda

***At their Council meeting in Brussels today, fisheries ministers addressed a wide range of issues. On the conservation of fisheries resources through technical measures, the Council reached agreement on a Presidency compromise. These technical measures already feature in the annex to the regulation on total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas. Today's agreement ensures that these technical measures will remain in place for 2010. They include: closed areas, the obligation to use sorting grids and square mesh panels, the high-grading ban in the North Sea and the Atlantic, provisions to protect elasmobranchs and gillnet provisions.***

The Commission is committed to its declared policy of seeking far-reaching conservation, selectivity and discard measures to tackle major problems such as discards in the North Sea and Atlantic. It appreciates the fact that, while the Member States share the objectives set out in the proposal, they need more time to analyse fully all the technical and economic impacts of this important set of measures.

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, further discussions will take place under the co-decision procedure, with the European Parliament fully involved in the process. The Commission is determined to work with the Member States and the European Parliament to find a workable solution that helps further the sustainability agenda to which all concerned subscribe and which will significantly decrease discards in a number of important fisheries.

On the fishing possibilities for the **turbot stock in the Black Sea** for 2010, the Council reached political agreement on a TAC of 96 tonnes. This will be coupled with national management plans which Bulgaria and Romania will soon be submitting and which will have to be agreed with the Commission.

Under AOB items, the Commissioner reported to Council on the state of play on annual consultations with Norway, seabirds and ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna).

Today's Council meeting coincided with the conclusion of the first round of **annual consultations with Norway** for 2010 in Bergen. This year's negotiations, on issues including Norwegian access to mackerel fisheries in EU waters, have not yet produced an agreement. Negotiations will continue in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Borg also raised the issue of effective mitigation measures to combat **incidental catches of seabirds**. In spring 2010, the Commission will launch a study to collect data, as a first step towards fully addressing fishing's effects on seabird populations. Alongside this, fishermen should be encouraged further to applying existing effective low-cost mitigation measures.

Lastly, the Commissioner informed ministers of the outcome of last week's **ICCAT annual meeting** in Recife, Brazil and the impact on the EU tuna fleets. On bluefin tuna fisheries there was a consensus for a substantial cut in the total allowable catch, a reduction in the season for purse seiners, drastic reductions in fishing capacity and other important conservation measures. ICCAT has risen to the challenge and ensured that the stocks concerned will be given the chance to replenish themselves. Furthermore, ICCAT has shown that Regional Fisheries Management Organisations can take the necessary decisions to manage fish stocks on the high seas. Overall, the outcome of the ICCAT meeting is good news for the sustainability of the stocks, fisheries and fishing communities concerned.