

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1981 - 1982

12 October 1981

Document 1-572/81

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled by Mr DE GUCHT and Mr DE CLERQ

on behalf of the Liberal and Democratic Group

pursuant to rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the international protection of seals on the
North Sea tidal flats off the Netherlands, Den-
mark and the Federal Republic of Germany

PE 75.209

The European Parliament,

- whereas the tidal flats between the Frisian Islands and the North Dutch coast, Denmark and the Federal Republic of Germany form a unique European wildlife area;
- whereas this area is particularly important for its flora and fauna;
- whereas this area is a habitat of the common seal;
- whereas the numbers of common seal in the Dutch section of the tidal flats have fallen from some 3,000 to about 500 since 1950 and this species is therefore threatened with extinction;
- whereas this decline has been caused by:
 1. industrial and urban pollution from land and sea;
 2. large-scale leisure activities, accompanied by disruption and noise;
 3. disturbances caused by shipping and aviation;
 4. human activities in the field of industry and leisure;
- whereas this pollution and disruption form a threat to the common seal and its successful breeding throughout the entire length of the three countries' tidal flats,
- whereas the seal populations of Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein are particularly important as breeding stock for all the tidal flats and, without protection, will also be endangered in the future;
- whereas, therefore, international measures must be taken immediately to prevent a further decline in the common seal population throughout these tidal flats;
 1. Considers that all human activities which could cause a further decline in the seal population must be stopped;
 2. Notes the urgent need to halt the production, use and discharge, in any form, of all contaminating substances which are harmful to seals, including persistent hydrochlorides such as PCBs;

3. Recommends the establishment of sanctuaries along the tidal flats free from disturbance caused by noise and people and supervised by the various Member States;
4. Recommends the maintenance of the present ban on hunting;
5. Stresses the need for adequate Community legislation;
6. Requests the Commission to put forward a plan for the protection of the tidal flats and their wildlife, taking account of Parliament's recommendations;
7. Recommends Member States to undertake any additional studies and initiatives which might result in the optimum protection of the tidal flats and their wildlife;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission of the European Communities and to the Member State Governments.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The North Sea tidal flats are the shallow waters between the Frisian Islands and the mainland of the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany and Denmark.

The best known Dutch Frisian islands in this group of about 20 islands are Texel, Vlieland, Terschelling, Amerland, Schiermonnikoog and Rottumeroog.

The area is tidal and apart from the channels, is virtually dry at low tide.

It is thus one of the most important and valuable areas for wildlife in Western Europe.

The tidal flats are particularly important as a spawning ground for many species of fish and as a resting and overwintering area for migratory birds from the North.

The area enjoys international renown for its exceptional flora and fauna.

For several years it has been seriously threatened by human activities.

It has, for example, attracted large-scale leisure activities, with the attendant disturbance caused by people and noise.

The area also suffers from serious industrial and urban pollution caused by the discharge of waste water from the mainland and growing pollution of the seawater itself.

Aviation and shipping also seriously disturb the necessary natural calm in the area.

This threatened area is the habitat of the common seal.

Since 1950 the numbers of common seal in the Dutch section of the tidal flats have fallen from some 3000 to about 500.

The European Community must, as a matter of urgency, afford this area the necessary international protection and thus ensure the preservation and development of the unique flora and fauna, and in particular the seal population found on the tidal flats.