

Further to the letter (your ref. LOS/SGR/2014) by the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, Mr Miguel de Serpa Soares, asking the Council of Europe to contribute to the establishment of a report which will be examined by the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea in March 2014 on the topic “The role of seafood in global food security”, please find herewith the contribution of the Council of Europe regarding the relevant activities of our Organisation in this field.

## **1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)**

In 2009, the **PACE** adopted **Resolution 1169 (2009)** and **Recommendation 1888 (2009)** on “**Towards a new ocean governance**” (links attached below), expressing concern over the deterioration of marine environment, in particular the decline of biodiversity and of certain fish species and the intensifying ocean acidification (against the background of ongoing climate change/ocean absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions). The recommendation addressed, via the Committee of Ministers, a number of proposals to governments of Council of Europe member States regarding management of marine protected areas.

This can be seen as relevant in the context of discussion on seafood and food security.

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=17788&lang=en>  
(resolution)

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=17789&lang=en>  
(recommendation)

More recently - on 3 October 2014 - the Assembly adopted **Resolution 1957 (2013)** on “**Food security – a permanent challenge for us all**” on the basis of the report (Doc. 13302) by Fernand Boden (Luxembourg, Group of the European People’s Party):

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=20064&lang=en>  
(report)

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=20227&lang=en>  
(resolution)

The report emphasizes the major imbalances and problems of governance in food supply, as well as warning against emerging food-related risks.

Here are the main points:

- In the first paragraph of *the explanatory memorandum*, the rapporteur explains that the notion of food for the purposes of this report includes mainly products supplied by agriculture and fisheries.

- Paragraph 18 of the explanatory memorandum (section on “Food waste” under the chapter on “Threats to food security”) explains how food wastage is penalizing consumers through higher prices, especially for fresh food such as vegetables, fruit, milk, meat and fish. The paragraph also points out that reducing food waste would help

increase quantities and affordability of food available and would alleviate the burden on the environment.

- A related section on “Environmental limits to growth?” correlates population growth to threats to natural resources and biodiversity in general, as well as highlighting problems for producing quality food given water pollution with agrochemicals more specifically.

- Then, the section on “Food fraud” refers to contaminated foodstuffs from South-East Asia and the mislabeling of fish varieties worldwide in commercial circuits, which indicates “serious problems in terms of traceability, labelling and quality control throughout the food chain”.

- Many comments in the chapter on “The challenge of food safety: ensuring quality” are relevant to seafood (originating from fisheries and aquaculture).

- Paragraph 50 in the section on “Environmental and agricultural policies of the “Strategies for strengthening food security” chapter points out that agriculture and fisheries, as part of the green economy, are central in sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger. Reference is also made to the call of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food for a type of agriculture, as well as fisheries, “which are more environmentally sustainable and socially fair”.

- The *resolution* sums up the Assembly’s proposals for improving food security as regards sustainable production and responsible consumption of food, steps to enhance food safety, affordability of food and regulatory mechanisms. These recommendations to member States apply to food as defined to cover products derived from agriculture and fisheries.

The Assembly continues to follow the issue of food security in general and the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development could take up the various aspects of food safety in its future work, not least through its Sub-Committee on Environment and Energy.

## **2. The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare (EDQM)**

Since 1 January 2009, the EDQM has been engaged in efforts to strengthen consumer health protection in Europe, with a focus on the safe use of *cosmetics* and *packaging* or other materials that are intended to be brought in contact with food or medicines. The Committee of Experts on Packaging Materials for Food and Pharmaceutical Products (P-SC-EMB) is concerned with the quality of contact materials and articles for foodstuffs. Contact materials are made of plastics, paper, cardboard, steel, cork and other materials. They can be a source of contamination for foodstuffs when material constituents are unintentionally transferred to the food item and the health of consumers may then be compromised.

Food packaging provides protection for foodstuffs and contributes to ensure food safety. In 2013, the following Council of Europe recommendations were published:

- A Resolution on “Metals and alloys used in food contact materials and articles” and a practical guide for manufacturers and regulators [ISBN 978-92-871-7703-2].

The P-SC-EMB is composed of representatives from national ministries and institutions acting in the field of public health. More than 200 experts from 34 member states and 3 observers to the European Pharmacopoeia Convention follow or contribute actively to the work. The European Commission, the Joint Research Centre and the European Food Safety Authority are observers in the P-SC-EMB.

The information regarding recent activities of the EDQM is hereby submitted for your consideration, even if the draft UN report "The role of seafood in global food security" does not seem to treat, at least explicitly, the subject of food contact materials as a source for contamination of food.

The Secretariat of the Council of Europe trusts that this information will be useful for your purposes and would like to be kept informed of further developments in the establishment of the report which will be examined by the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea.