

Supply

Representatives of the European Commission and member countries of NAFO were recently briefed on the Canadian position on foreign overfishing. This government, Mr. Speaker, is placing high priority on the issue of foreign overfishing. Just this week, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans went to New York City to meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to stress the importance Canada places on conservation of marine resources.

We hope to place it on the agenda at the earth summit conference of world leaders in Rio de Janeiro in June. Canada will call for a follow-up conference to deal specifically with the high seas fisheries. At Canada's request a special NAFO session will be held in May to focus on effective control measures outside the 200-mile zone to ensure that catches do not exceed NAFO decisions.

In the next two months, the minister will be travelling to Cuba, Norway, Russia, Poland and other NAFO contracting parties to reinforce this position.

Concerning non-NAFO fleets, Mr. Speaker, there have been encouraging signs very recently that the problem of Panamanian and Korean fleets may be approaching an end, including commitments by the Korean government regarding their vessels now operating outside the 200-mile zone. While we are making progress, this government recognizes and shares the frustration of those in the Atlantic fishery that see these and other activities undertaken against foreign overfishing, but with little in the way of concrete results. This cannot go on.

There are those who say Canada should take immediate steps to extend its functional jurisdiction to the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. But, as the minister said recently in London and Tokyo, all avenues available to us must be explored if we are to achieve tangible progress toward ending foreign overfishing.

• (1330)

Other measures, including unilateral measures, will be contemplated only after all other options are exhausted.

The fourth point concerns Canadianization of underutilized species fishery. To alleviate harvesting pressure on northern cod and other traditional species, the

government is encouraging the development of new fisheries.

While foreign allocations will not be eliminated, they will be reduced to a minimum.

Soon, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will be announcing the approval of industry proposals to harvest underutilized fish stocks. This will increase employment in fish plants and will diversify and add value to Canadian seafood products.

In addition, we will soon be establishing an advisory board on the use of foreign vessels and foreign allocations within the Canadian zone. This board will be composed of persons from outside government who are knowledgeable with respect to the Canadian fishing industry. The board will operate in a manner open to the public and will have a mandate to provide advice as to what is in the interest of Canada.

The fifth point deals with scientific research. There is a need to restore confidence in the reliability of fisheries resource assessments. To do this, we need to integrate into the process the experience of fisherman, inshore and offshore. Scientists analyze the inshore catch-and-effort data and collaborate with inshore fishermen in studying ocean conditions. At the same time, scientists invite fishermen on research cruises and accompany them on commercial trips.

Industry has proposed that special scouting charters be undertaken to identify concentrations of northern cod, and to provide further information on catch rates and stock availability, particularly in divisions 3K and 3L inside and outside the 200-mile zone. The minister has asked the department to make the necessary arrangements for these scouting charters.

Fisheries and Oceans is committed to a further major increase in research on cod inside and outside the 200-mile zone. Important initiatives will focus on oceanographic factors—such as water temperatures, salinity and currents—which influence the migration of cod and capelin, and may also contribute to the mortality rate.

The sixth and last point, concerns control of the seal population. The population of harp seals off the east coast is estimated at 3.5 million. This is a substantial increase from the estimate of two million made by the Royal Commission on Sealing in 1985.