

issue is extremely encouraging and I just wanted to thank him.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we have already heard from a number of my colleagues, including the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, on the problem of foreign overfishing in the northwest Atlantic, the impact on the stocks, the measures needed to achieve sustainable development of the fishery and the tremendous efforts that the government is expending to resolve the problem and to ensure a viable future for the communities affected.

Well unfortunately we cannot create the fish, but if the hon. member is prepared to listen, which would be unusual for him, perhaps he might learn something.

The severe depletion of the northern cod biomass is only the most recent example, although it is certainly the most critical, of the precarious balance of nature, in this case in the northwest Atlantic, and the serious consequences when international management measures are disregarded.

The economies of the Atlantic provinces and Newfoundland in particular, are facing yet another blow with further plant closures, tying up of fleets, increased job losses. The tragic consequences of human suffering and hardship involved are only too evident and it is something on which the government is focusing all of its efforts.

[*Translation*]

The hon. members of the opposition raise the question of what is to be done to solve the problem. The government is pursuing a very clear strategy to this end and, while my colleagues have spoken to a number of its specific components, I would like to review it further with you. But there are a number of general points which must be emphasized in preface.

There is an international framework within which we carry out our strategy. The provisions of the Law of the Sea convention with respect to conservation of living marine resources of the high seas represent customary international law. The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization which derives from the Law of the Sea is the responsible regional fisheries management body. The United Nations which provided for the convening of the Conference on Environment and Development is a

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key multilateral forum for the resolution of international problems by peaceful means.

Bilateral diplomacy has a host of mechanisms aimed at the resolution of differences. But because each nation is sovereign, progress is often too slow and painful. One needs to make use of every possible avenue to ensure that a problem receives the priority that is warranted and that pressure from every source is exerted to achieve a resolution.

[*English*]

This then is the essence of the government's strategy. Most of the fishing by foreign fleets and all of the overfishing is taking place outside 200 miles in international waters where Canada has no jurisdiction except in relation to Canadian vessels.

Under the Law of the Sea, states have the duty to take such measures for their respective nationals as may be necessary for the conservation of the living resources of the high seas. They also have the duty to co-operate with other states or with regional organizations. But flag states alone have the legal authority to enforce against their own vessels.

The problem of overfishing is centred on the activities of vessels from the European Community, principally Spain and Portugal, and to a lesser extent from a few countries that are not members of NAFO, notably Panama and Korea.

[*Translation*]

I would emphasize that most of the countries that fish in the NAFO area—Japan, Russia, the Faroe Islands, Norway, Denmark, Cuba—support fisheries conservation, respect their NAFO quotas and cooperate with Canada.

[*English*]

Since 1986 however when the EC began to set its own unilateral quotas, EC vessels have reported catches of cod, flounder and redfish totalling more than 530,000 tonnes as against NAFO quotas of 100,000 tonnes. Non-NAFO vessels have caught more than 165,000 tonnes.

Since 1986 the EC and those other countries that do not co-operate with Canada by respecting the conservation decisions of NAFO have not been eligible for benefits in the Canadian zone. Their fishing vessels are barred from Canadian ports except in emergencies. They are not accorded allocations of surplus fish from under-