

The excessive level of the EC catches is part of the problem, but the relentless harvesting of juvenile stocks in recognized nursery areas is making things worse now and potentially disastrous in the future. For example, a random sample taken last month from the hold of a Spanish trawler contained 275 fish with a total weight of 113 pounds or 51 kilograms; the average weight of the fish was 6.6 ounces or less than 0.2 kilograms and the average length was 6.8 inches or 17.3 centimetres. These were immature fish. This is how you slaughter a fish stock.

What the EC is doing in the Northwest Atlantic is wrong for four principal reasons.

First, the present EC practices are the major impediment to the proper operation of the vital international conservation and resource management organization, NAFO. The resource simply cannot be properly managed with the EC constantly opting out of NAFO decisions.

Second, the EC's overfishing in the Northwest Atlantic is damaging an important resource, thereby harming fishermen in Canada, in other NAFO member states and, ultimately, harming their own fishermen.

Third, overfishing by the EC in the Northwest Atlantic is clearly inconsistent with the Community's Common Fisheries Policy which it applies and enforces in the waters of its member states. While the EC applies the principle of relative stability in allocating quotas in the waters of its member states, it has abandoned this principle by its unilateral decision to set higher quotas for its own use in NAFO regulated waters.

And fourth, as a more universal concern, the commitment of all responsible nations to the principle of sustainable development is being ignored by the EC both in terms of the excessive level of its catches and the targetting of juvenile fish in recognized nursery areas. This sets a very bad example for countries which are being pressed by the EC, as well as Canada, to adhere to the principles of sustainable development with respect to the tropical rain forest, desertification, rivers management, the ozone level, and other environmental concerns.

What we want the EC to do is simple, to adhere to NAFO conservation measures to end what is little more than an unrestricted fishery in the Northwest Atlantic.