EC/Solomon Islands Fisheries Partnership Agreement

2010/0094(NLE) - 27/05/2010 - Document attached to the procedure

This document comprises the final text of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Solomon Islands.

This Agreement is the result of negotiations which ended in the initialling of the new Agreement by the Parties on the 26 September 2009. The Partnership Agreement between the European Community and Solomon Islands on fishing off Solomon Islands (see CNS/2005/0168) is to be repealed and replaced by the new Fisheries Partnership Agreement.

In order to guarantee the continuation of fishing activities by Union vessels, it is essential that the new Fisheries Partnership Agreement be applied as quickly as possible. Both parties have therefore initialled an Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters providing for the provisional application of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement as from 9 October 2009 pending its entry into force.

The Agreement and the Protocol sets out the fishing opportunities for EU fishermen in the Solomon Islands fishing zones. The main characteristics may be summarised as follows:

Scope and purpose:this Agreement establishes the principles, rules and procedures governing:

- economic, financial, technical and scientific cooperation in the fisheries sector with a view to promoting responsible fishing in Solomon Islands fishing zone to guarantee the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fishery resources and developing Solomon Islands fisheries sector;
- the conditions governing access by EU fishing vessels to Solomon Islands fishing zone;
- cooperation on the arrangements for policing fisheries in Solomon Islands fishing zone with a view to ensuring that the above rules and conditions are complied with, that the measures for the conservation and management of fishery resources are effective and that illegal, undeclared and unregulated fishing is prevented;
- partnerships between companies aimed at developing economic activities in the fisheries sector and related activities, in the common interest.

The purpose of this new Partnership Agreement shall also be to cooperate with a view to implementing a sectoral fisheries policy adopted by Solomon Islands and to that end shall initiate a policy dialogue on the necessary reforms.

Promoting cooperation among economic stakeholders and in civil society: the Partnership Agreement stipulates that Parties shall encourage economic, scientific and technical cooperation in the fisheries and related sectors. The Parties shall consult one another with a view to coordinating the different measures that might be taken to this end. The Parties undertake to promote exchanges of information on fishing techniques and gear, preservation methods and the processing of fishery products. They shall endeavour to create conditions favourable to the promotion of relations between their enterprises in the technical, economic and commercial spheres, by encouraging the establishment of an environment favourable to the development of business and investment.

Fishing Protocol: the conditions for fishing activities are detailed in a Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided by the agreement between the parties for the period 2009-2012. The main provisions of this Protocol may be summarised as follows:

Financial contribution: the financial contribution shall amount to **EUR 400 000 per year**, corresponding to the fishing opportunities for highly migratory species. This financial contribution shall comprise an annual amount of EUR 260 000 equivalent to a reference tonnage of 4 000 tonnes per year, and a specific amount of EUR 140 000 per year for the support and implementation of Solomon Islands' sectoral fisheries policy. This specific amount shall form an integral part of the single financial contribution.

If the overall quantity of catches by EU vessels in Solomon Islands' fishing zones exceeds the reference tonnage, the amount of the annual financial contribution shall be increased by EUR 65 for each additional tonne caught. However, the total annual amount paid by the EU may not be more than EUR 800 000. 50% of the financial contribution of this Protocol shall be allocated each year to the support and implementation of objectives identified in the context of the sectoral fisheries policy drawn up by the Solomon Islands authorities. The fishing opportunities may be increased by mutual agreement provided that the conclusions of the annual meeting of the "Palau Arrangement" members and the annual review of the status of stocks made by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community confirm that such an increase will not endanger the sustainable management of Solomon Islands' resources. Conversely, if the Parties agree to adopt a reduction in the fishing opportunities the financial contribution shall be reduced proportionately and pro rata temporis.

Fishing authorisations:these authorisations shall be issued once the following standard amounts have been paid. EUR 13 000 per tuna seiner, equivalent to the fees due for 371 tonnes of tuna and tuna-like species caught per year. Shipowners shall undertake to employ, for the tuna-fishing season in Solomon Islands fishing zone, at least 25% seamen of ACP origin, giving priority to Solomon Islands seamen.

Fishing opportunities: **purse seiners: 4 vessels** shall be authorised to fish.

Exclusivity clause: EU vessels may fish in Solomon Islands fishing zone only if they are in possession of a valid fishing authorisation issued by Solomon Islands authorities under this Agreement and the Protocol hereto. For fishing categories not covered by the Protocol in force, and for exploratory fishing, the Solomon Islands authorities may grant fishing authorisations to EU vessels. However, the granting of these authorisations remains dependent on a favourable opinion from the two Parties.

Duration of the Agreement: the Partnership Agreement, accompanied by the Protocol and its annexes shall have a duration of **three years** and shall be tacitly renewed for three-year periods. It shall be valid for the period between 9 October 2009 and 8 October 2012.