

Resolution on the EU-Mauritania Fisheries Partnership Agreement

2011/2586(RSP) - 12/05/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU-Mauritania Fisheries Partnership Agreement.

The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Greens/EFA, ALDE, and GUE/NGL groups.

Noting that the current protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) with Mauritania expires on 31 July 2012, Parliament welcomes the Commission's proposal to open negotiations on the renewal of the protocol, as well as the proposed introduction of a human rights clause, while underlining that the protocol should be maintained only if it is mutually beneficial, adjusted appropriately and implemented correctly. Members insist that any and all access negotiated for EU-flagged vessels to fish in Mauritanian waters must be based on the principle of surplus stocks as described in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, stressing the following:

- there must be a rigorous assessment of all stocks for which access is sought or which are likely to be caught by the EU fleet as a by-catch; -any access granted to the EU must relate to those resources which are unable to be caught by the Mauritanian fleet;
- should effort reductions be necessary, those third-country (EU and other) fleets causing the most environmental damage must be the first to make reductions.

Parliament notes with considerable concern that the ex-post evaluation concluded that **most stocks in Mauritania were either fully exploited or over-exploited**, particularly octopus, and recommended reductions in fishing effort for those stocks. It encourages the Commission to discuss with Mauritania the development of long-term fisheries management plans that would include all fishery allocations by the Mauritanian authorities, to both their national fleets and third-country fleets, including the elimination of any fleet over-capacity.

Members go on to state that it is essential, when negotiating fishing opportunities under the new protocol, to take into account **Mauritania's relations with third countries** which also fish in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) under bilateral or private agreements. They insist on receiving reliable data on fishing opportunities and catches by third countries in Mauritanian waters so as to be able to identify any surplus resources. In the case of those stocks shared with other West African states, levels of fishing access in Mauritania must be negotiated with due regard to fishing levels in the other states.

On the matter of **control measures**, Parliament urges the Commission to call on the Mauritanian authorities to give guarantees regarding their interpretation of the control measures. It reiterates that EU vessels are equipped with vessel monitoring systems (VMS), and that this must be the instrument used to determine their position. Reliance on approximate visual estimation of the distance to the coast should be prohibited, as it has been shown to be unreliable and led to legal uncertainty for the fleet. Members stress that any alternative system should be mutually agreed in advance. Lastly, the protocol should stipulate that, if a vessel's VMS system fails, the vessel must have the system repaired within two weeks or have its authorisation to fish suspended until the repairs have been completed.

Parliament moves on to urge the Commission to ensure that fishing activities under the FPA meet the same **sustainability criteria** as fishing activities in EU waters, including those relating to selectivity. The

Commission is asked to establish a dialogue with Mauritania aimed at helping the country further to develop a responsible fisheries policy which meets both conservation requirements and its objective of promoting the economic development of fisheries resources.

Members feel that the **money paid as compensation for access to fish stocks in Mauritanian waters** must be clearly uncoupled from financial support for the Mauritanian multiannual fisheries programme, in that any reduction in fishing opportunities must not lead to a reduction in EU payments under the multiannual programme. They also state that financial support for the Mauritanian multiannual fisheries programme must be in line with Mauritania's needs for sustainable fisheries development, in particular management (research, control, stakeholder participation mechanisms, infrastructure and so on), as expressed in the EU-Mauritania cooperation and development framework. Financial support under the FPA should support and enhance the EU's development cooperation objectives, with a view to implementing the EU's legal obligation under Article 208 TFEU to ensure 'policy coherence for development'.

The resolution notes that certain lines of support for the fisheries sector in Mauritania have not been implemented satisfactorily, including the modernisation and development of small-scale traditional coastal fishing and fishery-related industries, the development of port infrastructure and better conditions for unloading catches; the development of aquaculture projects; and improved monitoring and surveillance at sea. It considers it necessary to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the reasons for the **inadequate achievement of the objectives regarding development cooperation** and the various lines of support for the fisheries sector in Mauritania. The FPA must include effective oversight mechanisms to ensure that funds earmarked for development, and in particular for infrastructure improvements in the fisheries sector, are used properly.

Parliament states that all relevant **scientific information**, including the reports of the Joint Scientific Committee, data on catches by EU fleets and information on convictions for infringements, should be forwarded to Parliament and be in the public domain. It underlines the need for **Parliament to be wholly involved in both the negotiating process** and the long-term monitoring of the functioning of the new protocol. Parliament should also be represented at the Joint Committee meetings envisaged in fisheries agreements, and it insists that civil society, including both EU and Mauritanian fisheries representatives, also participate in those meetings. Lastly, Members call on the Commission to provide Parliament with the ex-post evaluation of the current protocol as an unclassified document, so that its Members can make an informed judgement as to whether the objectives set for this agreement have been achieved and, accordingly, whether they should consent to renewing the protocol.