EC/Comoros Fisheries Partnership Agreement: fishing opportunities and financial contribution. EU/Comoros Protocol

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PURPOSE: to conclude a new Fisheries Protocol between the EU and the Comoros.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

BACKGROUND: on the basis of the powers conferred on it by the Council, the European Commission has conducted negotiations with the Union of the Comoros with a view to renewing the Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros. At the end of the negotiations a new draft protocol was initialled by the negotiators on 5 July 2013. It is now necessary to conclude this Protocol on behalf of the EU.

CONTENT: this proposal seeks the conclusion of the Protocol between the European Union and the Comoros setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the two parties currently in force. The main aim of the Protocol to the Agreement is to provide fishing opportunities for European Union vessels in the fishing zone of the Union of the Comoros within the limits of the available surplus.

Towards sustainable fishing: the general aim is to strengthen the cooperation between the European Union and the Comoros, thereby creating a partnership framework within which to develop a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fisheries resources in the fishing zone of the Union of the Comoros, in the interests of both parties.

Financial contribution: the overall annual financial contribution should is set at **EUR 600 000/year** over the entire reference period. This is based on:

- a reference tonnage of 6 000 tonnes, for an amount of EUR 300 000 linked to access. If the overall quantity of catches by EU vessels in the fishing zone of the Union of the Comoros exceeds the reference tonnage, the total amount of the annual financial contribution shall be increased by EUR 50 for each additional tonne caught during the year in question. However, the total annual amount paid by the European Union shall not be more than twice the amount. Where the quantities caught by EU vessels exceed the quantities corresponding to twice the total annual amount, the amount due for the quantity exceeding that limit shall be paid the following year;
- support for the development of the sectoral fisheries policy of the Union of the Comoros amounting to EUR 300 000. This support meets the objectives of the national fisheries policy and in particular the needs of the Union of the Comoros in the fight against illegal fishing.

Fishing opportunities: **42 tuna seiners and 20 surface longliners** shall be authorised to fish. The Joint Committee may review these fishing opportunities and adjust them by mutual agreement, provided that they continue to comply with the principles of sustainable fishing. In this case, the financial contribution shall be adjusted proportionately and *pro rata temporis*.

Where necessary the Joint Committee may examine and adapt, by mutual agreement, the provisions governing the pursuit of fishing activities and the rules for implementing this Protocol and the Annexes thereto.

Duration of the Agreement: the Protocol should apply from 1 January 2014 and for a period of three years.

In addition, the Protocol contains specific clauses for its suspension or termination.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: the total financial envelope allocated to this Protocol would be **EUR 2.132 million** from 2014 to 2016, including administrative costs for the management of the Protocol and human resources expenditure.