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

2013/0388(NLE) - 06/12/2013 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to conclude the Protocol between the EU and the Comoros setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: the European Union has negotiated with the Union of the Comoros a new protocol to the Partnership Agreement granting vessels of the European Union fishing opportunities in Comoros waters.

That new protocol was signed on the basis of a Decision and is provisionally applicable as from 1 January 2014.

Given that it is in the interest of the European Union to implement the Partnership Agreement by means of a Protocol establishing the fishing opportunities and the corresponding financial contribution, and setting out the conditions for promoting responsible and sustainable fishing in Comoros waters, it is now necessary to approve the new Protocol on behalf of the European Union.

CONTENT: under this proposal, the Council is invited to approve, on behalf of the European Union, the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement with the Comoros.

The draft Protocol seeks 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.

For further information as regards the financial implications of the draft Protocol and its impact on the EU budget, *please refer to the summary of the Commission's initial legislative proposal dated 08/11/2013*.

Simplified procedure to define the EU's position within the EU-Comores Joint Committee: the Partnership Agreement sets up a Joint Committee which is responsible for monitoring the application of this Agreement. Furthermore, in accordance with the Protocol, the Joint Committee may approve certain modifications to the Protocol. In order to facilitate the approval of such modifications, it is appropriate to empower the Commission, subject to specific conditions, to approve them under **a simplified procedure.**

Annex: the draft Decision outlines the scope of the powers conferred on the Commission as well as the procedure to establish the Union's position within the Joint Committee. The Commission should be authorised to negotiate with the Comoros and, where appropriate, agree on modifications to the Protocol in respect of the following issues:

- review of fishing opportunities;
- decision on the modalities of the sectoral support;
- implementation of the Protocol and the Annexes thereto.

In the Joint Committee, the European Union should act in accordance with the objectives pursued by the European Union within the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy as well as with the relevant rules adopted by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations. The necessary steps shall be taken so that the position to be expressed on the European Union's behalf takes account of the latest statistical, biological and other relevant information transmitted to the Commission.

Technical provisions have been provided laying down the practical arrangements for the approval of such amendments to the Protocol.