

EU/Gabon Fisheries Partnership Agreement: fishing opportunities and financial contribution from 24 July 2013 to 23 July 2016. Protocol

2013/0216(NLE) - 14/04/2014 - Final act

PURPOSE: to conclude a Protocol between the European Union and Gabon setting out fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the two Parties currently in force.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision of 2014/232/EU on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol setting out fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Gabonese Republic.

BACKGROUND: the Union has negotiated a new protocol with Gabon granting Union vessels fishing opportunities in waters in which Gabon exercises its sovereignty or its jurisdiction as regards fishing.

The New Protocol was signed in accordance with Council Decision 2013/462/EU, and is applied provisionally as from 24 July 2013.

It is now appropriate to approve the protocol on behalf of the European Union.

CONTENT: by means of this decision, the Council approves on behalf of the European Union, with the consent of the European Parliament, a Protocol setting out fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement.

Objective: the Protocol to the Agreement is to provide fishing opportunities for EU vessels in Gabonese waters within the limits of the available surplus, in accordance with the best available scientific advice and recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

The general aim is to enhance the cooperation between the European Union and Gabon, thereby creating a partnership framework within which to develop a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fishery resources in the Gabonese fishing zone, in the interests of both Parties.

Fishing protocol: the Protocol provides for annual fishing opportunities in the following categories:

- 27 freezer tuna seiners;
- 8 pole-and-line tuna vessels.

Financial contribution: the annual financial contribution of EUR 1 350 000 is based on:

- a reference tonnage of 20 000 tonnes, for an amount of EUR 900 000 linked to access;
- support for the development of the sectoral fisheries policy of Gabon amounting to EUR 450 000. This support meets the objectives of the national fisheries policy and in particular the needs of the Gabonese Republic in the fight against illegal fishing and the implementation of the national fisheries strategy.

This financial contribution was calculated on the basis of the above-mentioned reference tonnages. The Parties may adopt, in the Joint Committee, measures entailing a review of fishing opportunities. In that case, the financial contribution shall be adjusted proportionately and pro rata temporis.

At the request of Gabon, the Gabonese Government may call on the European Union in order to consider the possibility of experimental fishing in order to exploit certain fisheries, under the direct supervision of scientists representing the two Parties and either ICCAT or the relevant regional fisheries organisation. They shall consult each other and determine on a case-by-case basis the relevant species, conditions and other parameters. The authorisations for experimental fishing shall be granted for a maximum of 12 months. In the event that the Parties consider that experimental campaigns have given positive results, the Government may allocate fishing opportunities for new species to the European Union fleet until this Protocol expires. The financial compensation of the current Protocol shall consequently be increased.

Duration of the fishing protocol: this Protocol and the Annexes are concluded for a duration of **three years** from the date of signature of the new Protocol.

Simplified procedure for establishing the EU's position in the EU-Gabon Joint Committee: the Partnership Agreement sets up a Joint Committee which is responsible for monitoring the application of the 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, the Commission is empowered, subject to specific conditions, to approve them **under a simplified procedure**.

Annex: it should be noted that the decision lays down the scope of the powers conferred on the Commission, as well as the procedure for establishing the EU's position in the EU-Gabon Joint Committee. The Commission shall be authorised to negotiate with Gabon modifications in regard to the following issues:

- revision of fishing opportunities;
- the modalities of the sectoral support of fisheries policy;
- certain technical specifications and modalities falling within the powers of the Joint Committee.

In the Joint Committee set up under the Fisheries Partnership Agreement, the Union shall act in accordance with the objectives pursued by the Union within the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Lastly, technical provisions are envisaged for setting the framework and the practical modalities for the approval of modifications to the Protocol, taking into account the latest scientific data on fishing opportunities.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: the decision enters into force on 14.04.2014.