General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean: amended Agreement

2014/0274(NLE) - 20/04/2015 - Final act

PURPOSE: to conclude an amended Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision (EU) 2015/674 on the acceptance, on behalf of the European Union, of the amended Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean.

BACKGROUND: the Agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), was established and approved at the Fifth Session of the FAO Conference in 1949 and entered into force on 20 February 1952.

The European Community acceded to the GFCM on 16 June 1998 through Decision 98/416/EC.

On 15 November 2013, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate, on behalf of the Union, amendments to the Agreement on matters falling within the Union's competence. The Member States and the Commission conducted negotiations as per their respective areas of competence in accordance with the mandate and in close cooperation.

Negotiations were successfully concluded at the GFCM meeting of 19 to 24 May 2014. At that meeting, the GFCM endorsed the text of the amended Agreement.

The purpose of the amendments to the Agreement is to modernise the GFCM and reinforce its role in the conservation of fisheries resources in its area of competence.

The objectives, **general principles and functions of the GFCM have been reviewed and broadened** to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources and their environment.

Given that the amended Agreement is in line with the principles of the Union's Common Fisheries Policy, it is therefore in the Union's interest to accept the amended Agreement.

It is now necessary to conclude the amended Agreement on behalf of the European Union.

CONTENT: under this Decision, the amended Agreement establishing the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean is hereby approved on behalf of the Union.

The amended Agreement revises the structure and content of the current one, so as to bring it in line with modern RFMO instruments.

Amendment: main changes introduced are as follows:

- A clearer explanation of the purpose of the GFCM Agreement: the new Agreement sets a clear overall objective of **biological, social, economic and environmental sustainability of living marine resources**. It also introduces definitions of the terms that are necessary for the correct interpretation of the Agreement.

Better defined functions of the GFCM, which include the promotion of common fishery management through multiannual management plans, the establishment of fisheries restricted areas, and the collection and dissemination of data.

In this context, the new Agreement integrates core elements of the Common Fisheries Policy regarding:

- the objective of maximum sustainable yield,
- the ecosystem and precautionary approach,
- the reduction of discards,
- the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

- **Sanctions**: the amendment includes provisions for the establishment of measures/sanctions to address non-compliance by Members/non-Members.

- **Dispute settlements**: the establishment of a well-defined dispute settlement mechanism in case disputes arise between Contracting Parties.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: the date of entry into force of the amended Agreement will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union by the General Secretariat of the Council.