

EU/Cook Islands Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and implementation Protocol

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PURPOSE: to conclude a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Government of the Cook Islands and the Implementation Protocol thereto.

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 Commission conducted negotiations with the Government of the Cook Islands with a view to concluding a new Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and an Implementation Protocol thereto between the European Union and the Cook Islands.

Following these negotiations, a new Agreement and Protocol were initialled on 21 October 2015. They cover a period of eight years and four years respectively from the date of their provisional application, i.e. from the date of their signature.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council adopt by Decision the conclusion of this new Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Government of the Cook Islands and the **Implementation Protocol Agreement**.

The new Agreement will provide for a framework taking into account the priorities of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy and its external dimension, with a view to establishing a strategic partnership between the European Union and the Cook Islands.

This Agreement establishes the principles, rules and procedures governing:

- the conditions under which Union vessels may engage in fishing activities in the Cook Islands' fishing areas;
- economic, financial, technical and scientific cooperation in the fisheries sector with a view to promoting responsible fishing in the Cook Islands' fishery waters;
- cooperation on the management, control and surveillance measures for policing fisheries in the Cook Islands' fishery waters.

The main objective of the new Protocol is to provide **fishing opportunities** to Union vessels in the Cook Islands fishing zone, on the basis of the best available scientific advice and respecting the conservation and management measures of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) where applicable within the limits of the available surplus.

The aim is also to enhance cooperation between the European Union and the Cook Islands to promote a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fisheries resources in the Cook Islands' fishing zone, in the interests of both parties.

The Protocol provides for **fishing opportunities for 4 tuna seiners** to fish for highly migratory species as listed in Annex 1 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Agreement and the Implementation Protocol thereto also provide for the possibility of their suspension or termination in the event of a breach by either one of the Parties of the **respect for human rights**.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: the total financial contribution shall be **EUR 2 870 000** for the whole duration of this Protocol. This total financial contribution shall comprise two dissociated elements:

- an annual amount for access to the Cook Islands' fishery areas of **EUR 385 000** for the first and second year, and of **EUR 350 000** for the third and fourth year, equivalent to a reference tonnage of 7 000 tonnes per year, and
- a specific annual amount of **EUR 350 000** for the support and implementation of the Cook Islands' sectoral fisheries policy.