EU/Mauritius Fisheries Partnership Agreement: fishing opportunities and financial contribution 2017-2021. Protocol

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted the report by Norica NICOLAI (ALDE, RO) on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for by the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Mauritius.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament **give its consent** to the conclusion of the Protocol.

As recalled by the explanatory statement accompanying the recommendation, the first bilateral fishing agreement between EU and the Republic of Mauritius was done in 1989, and the latest fisheries Protocol started in 2014 and finished on 27 January 2017.

The latest Protocol covered and annual reference tonnage of 5 500t/year, for an annual financial contribution of EUR 660 000, out of which EUR 302 500 were for the support and implementation of the countries fisheries and maritime policy.

The *ex post* evaluation of the previous Protocol shows that both parties have benefited from this framework, with the Mauritian government utilising the EU funds for sectorial support, a better Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) protection and considerable progress in implementing its environmental policy and promoting sustainability. At the same time, the EU fleet has benefited from a more stable, predictable and clear framework.

The new Protocol, initialled on 26 April 2017 covers a period of four years, provides fishing opportunities for 40 tuna seiners and 45 surface long-liners, as well as a maximum of 20 supply vessels to assist the operations of the EU fishing vessels.

As part of the Protocol:

- the Republic of Mauritius will apply the same technical and conservation measures to all industrial fleets operating in its waters, in order to ensure a level playing field. At the same time, the Mauritius authorities will provide the EU relevant information regarding foreign fishing activities in its waters;
- the EU and Mauritius will implement this agreement in accordance with the Article 9 of the Cotonou Agreement as regard to the respect of human rights, democratic principle and rule of law;
- the Parties will cooperate in the field of fight against legal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU).

The suspension can be initiated if one of the Parties does not comply with the provisions of the Protocol, if a breach of fundamental and human rights has occurred.

Mauritius has a continuously growing economy, with the fishing sector bringing approximately 1.4% of the GDP of the country. The country’s development plan of 2015 includes fishery and ocean economy as one of the main pillars, with due respect for long term management and sustainable exploitation of the marine environment.