EC/Comoros Fisheries Partnership Agreement: denunciation

2017/2266(INI) - 15/03/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 608 votes to 13, with 31 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros.

The Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Comoros provides for its **denunciation** by one of the parties in the event of serious circumstances, such as **non-compliance with the commitments entered into by the parties with regard to fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing**.

The first fisheries agreement between the EEC and the Comoros dates back to 1988 and whereas the fleets of EEC/EU Member States have since then been given access to fishing opportunities under a series of implementing protocols.

The Comoros was notified on 1 October 2015 of the possibility of its being identified as a non-cooperating third country for failure to exert adequate control of vessels registered under the Comorian flag.

Having been identified as a **non-cooperating country** in May 2017 and listed as such in July 2017 by the EU, which issued a ‘red card’, **the country has still failed to take the corrective measures needed** to resolve the problems identified and to combat IUU fishing.

Parliament regretted that the Comoros has failed to take the corrective measures needed to resolve the problems identified and to combat IUU fishing, despite being warned by the EU.

While recalling that the Comoros should meet its obligations under international law with respect to the supervision and control of vessels flying its flag, Members considered that the **Comoros should remain engaged with the EU** and seize this opportunity to put in place the measures necessary to improve its ability to address illegal fishing.

Parliament agreed with the Commission and the Council on the **need to apply the measures referred to in the IUU Regulation** for the denunciation of any standing bilateral fisheries agreement with the Comoros, in the event of failure to comply with undertakings made by it with regard to combating IUU fishing. It maintained, however, that **such denunciation must not mark the end of cooperation between the EU and the Comoros in the fisheries sector**. It stated that it was necessary to find ways of helping countries, in particular small island developing states, of which the Comoros is one, so as to enable them to alter their marine management policies.

The Commission is urged to seek to ensure that this relationship can be reactivated as soon as possible and for **investment and technical assistance to be promoted** in the following areas:

fisheries administration and governance system, legislation, institutional machinery, capacity-building for human resources (fishers, scientists, inspectors and others), and enhancement of the commercial and cultural value of traditional Comorian gear and fish;

- monitoring and scientific capacities, coastal protection capacity, and capacities for inspection, surveillance, and quality control;
- setting up facilities for refrigerating, distributing, and processing fish;
- construction and upgrading of landing and security infrastructure at ports and harbours;
- renewal of the Comorian small-scale fleet to improve safety, its ability to remain at sea, and fishing capacity.

Members called for the inclusion of a clause whereby, should the **Comoros remedy its shortcomings, the procedure would be stopped and the red card withdrawn**, thus enabling the EU fleet to return. They called on the Commission and Council to keep Parliament fully informed without delay of such developments as might occur in this process.