

Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean

2018/0239(NLE) - 06/09/2018 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to approve the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the Council can adopt the act only if the European Parliament has approved it.

BACKGROUND: the Union has exclusive competence, under the Common Fisheries Policy, in adopting measures for the conservation of marine biological resources and entering into agreements with third countries and international organisations in this respect.

On 31 March 2016, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate, on behalf of the Union, an international agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean.

On the basis of the relevant negotiating directives, the Commission conducted negotiations with the delegations from Canada, China, Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland, Iceland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Norway, Russia and the United States of America with a view to concluding a binding agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fishing in the central Arctic Ocean. These negotiations were successfully concluded on 30 November 2017.

The agreement that was signed subject to its conclusion at a later date must now be approved.

CONTENT: the draft Council decision aims to **approve, on behalf of the Union, the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean.**

The aim of the Agreement is to prevent unregulated fishing in the high seas of the central Arctic Ocean through precautionary conservation and management measures as part of a long-term strategy to preserve the health of marine ecosystems and to ensure the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fish stocks.

The Agreement:

- will **prevent unregulated commercial fishing** in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean, an area that is roughly 2.8 million square kilometres in size;
- will establish and operate **a joint programme of scientific research and monitoring** with the aim of improving the understanding of the ecosystems of this area and, in particular, of determining whether fish stocks might exist in this area that could be harvested on a sustainable basis;
- envisages the possibility that one or more additional regional fisheries management organisations or arrangements may be established for this area in the future.

Becoming a party to the Agreement will promote consistency in the Union's conservation approach across oceans and **reinforce its commitment** to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of marine biological resources globally, and is therefore in the Union's interest.