Amending the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). Protocol

2019/0225(NLE) - 12/11/2019 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to conclude, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

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 International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT Convention) aims, by establishing the ICCAT, to promote cooperation in maintaining the populations of tuna and tuna-like fish in the Atlantic Ocean at levels that permit the maximum sustainable catch for food and other purposes. The Convention entered into force on 21 March 1969. The Union is a party to the Convention, having approved it pursuant to the Council Decision of 9 June 1986.

From 2013 to 2018, discussions took place within the ICCAT Commission on the changes that are needed to the Convention. As a result, a Protocol has been drafted to amend to the Convention. The Protocol amending ICCAT, once signed (and provisionally applied from the date of its entry into force for other Contracting Parties, pending its entry into force for the Union), must now be approved.

CONTENT: the draft Council Decision seeks approval, on behalf of the Union, of the Protocol to amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

The Protocol is consistent with Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy, which provides that the Union shall:

- ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies;

- apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management, and is to aim to ensure that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains population of harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield;

- adopt management and conservation measures based on best available scientific advice, to support the development of scientific knowledge and advice, to gradually eliminate discards and to promote fishing methods that contribute to more selective fishing and the avoidance and reduction, as far as possible, of unwanted catches, to fishing with low impact on the marine ecosystem and fishery resources;

- apply those objectives and principles in the conduct of its external fisheries relations.

In accordance with the Joint Communication by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission ‘International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of oceans’6 and the Council conclusions on that Joint Communication, promoting measures to

support and enhance the effectiveness of RFMOs and, where relevant, improve their governance is a central feature of the Union's action in these fora.

The Protocol meets these objectives.