EU/Seychelles Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Implementation Protocol (2020-2026)

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PURPOSE: to conclude the sustainable fisheries partnership agreement and its implementing protocol (2020-2026) between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles.

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 current Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) between the European Union and Seychelles was signed on 28 February 2007 and entered into force on 2 November 2007 for a duration of six years. The agreement is tacitly renewable, and is therefore still in force.

The current 6-year Protocol to the FPA entered into application on 18th January 2014 and will expire on 17th January 2020. On the basis of the relevant negotiating directives, the Commission conducted negotiations with the Seychelles with a view to concluding, on behalf of the European Union, a new Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and its Implementing Protocol (2020-2026). At the end of the negotiations, an Agreement and Protocol were initialled by the negotiators on 22 October 2019. The new Agreement repeals and replaces the existing Agreement; it covers a period of six years as does the new Protocol.

The purpose of this proposal is to authorise the conclusion of the Agreement and its Implementing Protocol

CONTENT: the main aim of the new Agreement is to provide an updated framework taking into account the priorities of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy and its external dimension, with a view to continuing and reinforcing the strategic partnership between the European Union and the Seychelles in the field of fisheries.

The aim of the Implementing Protocol is to grant fishing opportunities to European Union vessels in the Seychelles fishing zone in accordance with the best available scientific advice and the resolutions and recommendations of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), within the limits of the available surplus. The aim is also to enhance cooperation between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles to promote a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fisheries resources in the Seychelles fishing zone and in the Indian Ocean, in the interest of both parties. In addition, this cooperation will also contribute to promote decent working conditions in fisheries activities.

Fishing opportunities

The new Protocol provides for fishing opportunities in the following categories:

- 40 tuna purse seine vessels;

- 8 surface longliners;

- support vessels in accordance with the relevant IOTC resolutions.

The conclusion of the Agreement and its Implementing Protocol enables to continue and reinforce the strategic fisheries partnership between the European Union and Seychelles. It will create fishing opportunities for Union vessels in the Seychelles fishing zone. It will also contribute to better management and conservation of fishery resources, through financial support (sectoral support) for the implementation of programmes adopted at national level by the partner country, in particular the Fisheries Comprehensive Plan, the monitoring and combating illegal fishing, and the support for the small-scale fisheries sector.

Lastly, the Agreement and the Protocol will contribute to Seychelles' sustainable exploitation of its marine resources and to Seychelles' fishing economy by promoting growth and decent working conditions, associated with fishing-related economic activities.

Budgetary implications

The EU annual financial contribution is EUR 5 300 000, based on:

- an annual amount for access to the fisheries resources in the Seychelles fishing zone of EUR 2 500 000 equivalent to a reference tonnage, for highly migratory species, of 50 000 tonnes per year;

- support for development of the sectoral fisheries policy of the Seychelles, amounting to EUR 2 800 000 per year. This support meets the objectives of Seychelles' Fisheries Comprehensive Plan. The annual amount for commitment and payment appropriations is established during the annual budgetary procedure, including for the reserve line for protocols not having entered into force at the beginning of the year.