EC/Guinea-Bissau Fisheries Partnership Agreement: implementation of the Agreement 2019-2024. Protocol

2019/0090M(NLE) - 17/06/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 620 votes to 44, with 22 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council Decision on the conclusion of the Protocol on the implementation of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (2019-2024). It also adopted a legislative resolution giving its consent to the conclusion of the Protocol.

Objectives of the Protocol

Stressing the importance of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) between the European Union and Guinea-Bissau, Members called on the Commission to take all the necessary steps to ensure that the new Protocol to the SFPA is more ambitious than the previous ones, in order to ensure that the SFPA:

- leads to satisfactory levels of development of the local fisheries sector to be achieved, and

- be consistent with the objectives referred to in the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDO) 14 to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

While the Agreement has provided significant fishing opportunities for EU vessels in Guinea-Bissau's fishing zone, Members felt that the development of the local fisheries sector remains unsatisfactory overall.

Strengthening support for the development of the fisheries sector

In order to achieve significant progress in the development of Guinea-Bissau's fisheries sector, including related industries and activities, Parliament called on the Commission to take all necessary measures, including a possible revision and strengthening of the sectoral support component of the Agreement, as well as measures to increase the absorption rate of the financial contribution.

With a view to contributing to the full implementation of the national strategy for fisheries and the blue economy, the Union should mobilise as a priority its technical and financial assistance in order to:

- strengthen institutional capacity, including regional and global fisheries governance strategies;

- support the strengthening of marine protected areas;

- develop key fisheries infrastructure, such as ports (industrial and artisanal), landing sites, fish storage and processing facilities, markets, distribution and marketing structures, or quality analysis laboratories;

- contribute to the good ecological condition of the marine environment, in particular by supporting the collection of waste and fishing gear by local actors;

- support small-scale fisheries, building the capacity of local operators in the fisheries sector by supporting fishermen's organisations, training professionals and enhancing the role of women and young people in fisheries.

The European Development Fund (EDF) and the sectoral support provided for in the EU-Guinea-Bissau SFPA should complement each other and be fully coordinated in order to contribute to the strengthening of the local fisheries sector. Members stressed the contribution of the SFPA to the local creation of direct and indirect employment. They also recalled that fish landings in Guinea-Bissau's ports should contribute to local processing activities and food security, both in terms of species and quality.

Improving the quality and reliability of catch data

The resolution stressed the need to improve:

- the quantity and quality of data on all catches (target species and by-catches), the conservation status of fishery resources in the Guinea-Bissau fishing zone and, in general, the impact of the SFPA on ecosystems;

- the governance, control and surveillance of the Guinea-Bissau fishing zone and to combat IUU fishing, in particular by stepping up vessel monitoring (through the VMS system), with a view to improving the sustainability of fishing activities.

Improving cooperation in the certification process

Members recalled that trade in fishery products from Guinea-Bissau had been banned by the EU for many years because of the country's failure to comply with the sanitary measures required by the EU. The delay in the analytical laboratory’s certification process (CIPA) is the main barrier to the exporting of fishery products from Guinea-Bissau to the EU.

Parliament called on the Commission and the Guinea-Bissau authorities to strengthen their cooperation in order to establish the conditions for the export of fishery products from Guinea-Bissau to the Union, in particular as regards the control of the sanitary conditions required and the certification of the analytical laboratory (CIPA) with a view to lifting the current ban.