EC/Mauritania Fisheries Partnership Agreement: extension of the Protocol

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PURPOSE: to conclude the Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on the extension of the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and Mauritania, which expires on 15 November 2020.

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: on 8 July 2019, the Council adopted the mandate authorising the European Commission to open negotiations for the renewal of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Partnership Agreement, which expires on 15 November 2019.

On 8 November 2019, the Protocol was extended for a period of one year by an Agreement in the form of an exchange of letters, until 15 November 2020 by means of Council Decision (EU) 2020/742.

Due to the current health context (COVID -19 pandemic) the ongoing negotiations for the renewal of a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Protocol will not be concluded in time to avoid a disruption of fishing activities at the end of this extension.

In this context, on 26 June 20203 the Council therefore authorised the Commission to negotiate a further extension to the Protocol for a maximum duration of one more year.

CONTENT: in order to prevent an interruption of fishing activity for the European fleet operating in Mauritanian waters, the Council Decision endorsing this agreement in the form of an exchange of letters must be adopted in due time to allow for signature by both Parties before 15 November 2020, when the current Protocol expires.

The aim of the Agreement in the form of an exchange of letters is to enable the European Union and Mauritania to continue working together to promote a sustainable fisheries policy and a sound exploitation of fishery resources in Mauritanian waters and to allow EU vessels to fish in those waters.

Fishing opportunities

The Protocol provides for fishing opportunities in the following categories:

- Vessels fishing for crustaceans other than spiny lobster and crab: 5 000 tonnes and 25 vessels;

-Black hake (non-freezer) trawlers and bottom longliners: 6 000 tonnes and 6 vessels;

- Pelagic freezer trawlers targeting black hake: 3 500 tonnes of hake, 1 450 tonnes of squid, 600 tonnes of cuttlefish for 6 vessels;

- Vessels fishing for demersal species other than black hake with gear other than trawls: 3 000 tonnes and 6 vessels;

- Tuna seiners: 12 500 tonnes (reference tonnage) and 25 vessels;

- Pole-and-line tuna vessels and longliners: 7 500 tonnes (reference tonnage) and 15 vessels;

- Pelagic freezer trawlers: 225 000 tonnes and 19 vessels;

- Non-freezer pelagic vessels: 15 000 tonnes (deducted from volume under category 6 if used) and 2 vessels.

Financial contribution

The annual financial contribution from the European Union is EUR 61 625 000, based on:

(a) an annual amount for access to fishery resources for the categories provided for in the Protocol, set at EUR 57 500 000 for the duration of the extension to the Protocol;

(b) support for the development of Mauritania's sectoral fisheries policy amounting to EUR 4 125 000 per year for the duration of the extension to the Protocol. This support meets the objectives of Mauritania's national policy on the sustainable management of its continental and maritime fishery resources for the entire duration of the Protocol.

The annual amount for commitment and payment appropriations is established during the annual budgetary procedure.

The exchange of letters regarding the extension also sets out a pro rata reduction in case the negotiations for the renewal of the Partnership Agreement and its Protocol result in their signature, leading to their application, before the annual extension covered by the exchange of letters expires.