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

2020/0002M(NLE) - 12/11/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 597 votes to 37, with 55 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles and its implementing protocol (2020-2026).

Objectives

The Commission and the Government of the Republic of Seychelles negotiated a new Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles (the 'EU-Seychelles SFPA') and its implementing Protocol for a period of six years.

The SFPA with the Seychelles is the most important tuna agreement of the Union in terms of volume of catches, as it gives access to Seychelles waters to 40 purse seiners, 8 surface longliners and support vessels, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

The general objective of the EU-Seychelles FPAA is to promote sustainable fisheries and to define the rules governing the access of EU fishing vessels to the Seychelles fishing zone. The new protocol grants catch possibilities to EU vessels in the Seychelles fishing zone, giving them access to an appropriate share of the surplus of living marine resources, calculated in accordance with the best scientific advice available and with the resolutions and recommendations of the IOTC, within the limits of the available surplus.

Recommendations to improve the agreement

In particular, Members suggested:

- promoting further economic, financial, technical and scientific cooperation between the European Union and Seychelles on sustainable fisheries, including support for control, monitoring and inspection of fishing activities;

- improving the artisanal component of the agreement as well as participation and dialogue with local communities and fisheries stakeholders;

- implementing the measures recommended by the IOTC, in particular as regards the restoration of yellowfin tuna stocks. Members called for an end to overfishing of yellowfin tuna by the EU fleet, including the introduction of catch limits for this species and stepping up the fight against illegal fishing;

- improving selectivity with a view to substantially reducing by-catches and unwanted catches of all species, in particular sensitive species and juveniles;

- strengthening measures for the prevention and collection of plastic waste in order to reduce marine litter;

- ensuring accurate and reliable data collection, exchange and processing of data, and effective monitoring, control and surveillance of fisheries to ensure long-term sustainable fish stocks.

Sectoral support

The resolution stressed the importance for sectoral support to be targeted more precisely so as to finance measures that actually support the sustainable development of the local fishing sector, in particular its artisanal segment, and that contribute to efficient fisheries management, paying special attention to crew safety training, the improvement of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) and training for women and young people.

Parliament drew the attention of the Commission and the Council to the fact that persistently proceeding with the provisional application of international agreements before Parliament has given its consent is not compatible with the guiding principles of the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making.