EC/Gabon Fisheries Partnership Agreement: Implementation Protocol

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PURPOSE: to conclude the implementing Protocol (2021-2026) of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the Gabonese Republic and the European Community.

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 Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) between Gabon and the European Community was signed on 4 June 2007 and entered into force on 11 June 2007 for a period of six years. The agreement is renewable by tacit agreement and is still in force.

A previous three-year protocol implementing the JPA entered into force on 24 July 2013 and expired on 23 July 2016. In 2015, the Commission carried out an ex-post evaluation of the 2013-2016 JPA protocol, as well as an ex-ante evaluation of a possible renewal of the protocol. The evaluation concluded that the EU fishing sector has a strong interest in operating in Gabon and that a renewal of the protocol would be in the interest of both parties.

The Commission conducted negotiations with the Government of Gabon with a view to concluding, on behalf of the EU, a new protocol for the implementation of the FPA (2021-2026). Following these negotiations, a protocol was initialled by the negotiators on 10 February 2021. The new protocol covers a period of five years from the date of its signature by both parties.

The negotiation of a new protocol for the implementation of the sustainable fisheries partnership agreement with Gabon is part of the Union's external action towards the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, and takes particular account of the Union's objectives regarding respect for democratic principles and human rights.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council decide to approve the protocol for the implementation (2021-2026) of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the Gabonese Republic and the European Community.

Objectives

The conclusion of the implementing protocol will allow the strategic partnership in the field of fisheries between the European Union and Gabon to be continued and strengthened. The conclusion of the protocol will create fishing opportunities for EU vessels in the Gabonese fishing zone.

The agreement and the protocol will also contribute to:

- better management and conservation of fisheries resources, through financial support (sectoral support) for the implementation of programmes adopted at national level by the partner country, in particular the global plan for fisheries, the monitoring of and fight against illegal fishing, and support for the artisanal fisheries sector;

- Gabon's sustainable exploitation of its marine resources and Gabon's fisheries economy by promoting growth in fisheries-related economic activities and the establishment of decent working conditions.

Fishing opportunities

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

- 27 purse seine tuna vessels;

- 6 pole-and-line tuna vessels;

- support vessels in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the limits set by Gabonese legislation;

- 4 trawlers targeting demersal fish and crustaceans to be authorised according to the results of exploratory campaigns.

Financial contribution

The annual financial contribution amounts to EUR 2 600 000, based on:

(a) an annual amount of EUR 1 600 000 for access to fisheries resources in the Gabonese fishing zone, equivalent to a reference tonnage for highly migratory species of 32 000 tonnes per year;

(b) support for the development of Gabon's sectoral fisheries policy amounting to EUR 1 000 000 per year. This support is in line with the objectives of the strategic plan for fisheries in Gabon.

The annual amount for commitment and payment appropriations will be established during the annual budget procedure.