Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean: accession of the European Union

2021/0184(NLE) - 08/07/2021

PURPOSE: accession of the European Union to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the North Pacific Ocean.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

The Union submitted requests to accede to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC), the body established by the Convention to manage the fisheries in the area covered by the Convention, was unable to reach consensus on the Union's 2018 and 2019 requests at its fourth and fifth annual sessions in 2018 and 2019 respectively. No annual session took place in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so the NPFC did not consider the Union's 2020 request. At its sixth annual session from 23 to 25 February 2021, the NPFC accepted the Union's request.

On 22 June 2018, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate the European Union's accession to the Convention for the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean.

Through its accession to the Convention, the Union aims to satisfy the interest from the Member States and the Union vessels concerned to gain access to the fisheries resources in the Convention's Area of Application.

Accession to the Convention should promote consistency in the Union's conservation approach across the world's oceans and reinforce its commitment to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources globally.

The Union's accession to the Convention is fully consistent with the Council conclusions of 23 October 2020 regarding the Commission Communication on the 'EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030'.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council decides to approve, on behalf of the Union, the accession of the European Union to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean.

Objectives

The objective of this Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fisheries resources in the Convention Area while protecting the marine ecosystems of the North Pacific Ocean in which these resources occur.

With a view to reaching the Convention's objectives, the measures taken aim at:

- promoting the optimum utilization and ensuring the long-term sustainability of fisheries resources;

- adopting measures, based on the best scientific information available, to ensure that fisheries resources are maintained at or restored to levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield;

- adopting and implementing measures in accordance with the precautionary approach and an ecosystem approach to fisheries, and in accordance with the relevant rules of international law;

- assessing the impacts of fishing activities on species belonging to the same ecosystem or dependent upon or associated with the target stocks and adopting, where necessary, conservation and management measures for such species;

- protecting biodiversity in the marine environment;

- preventing or eliminating overfishing and excess fishing capacity;

- ensuring that complete and accurate data concerning fishing activities are collected and shared in a timely and appropriate manner;

- ensuring that any expansion of fishing effort, development of new or exploratory fisheries, or change in the gear used for existing fisheries, does not proceed without prior assessment of the impacts of those fishing activities on the long-term sustainability of fisheries resources;

- ensuring compliance with conservation and management measures and that sanctions applicable in respect of violations are adequate in severity to be effective in securing compliance, to discourage violations wherever they occur and to deprive offenders of the benefits accruing from their illegal activities;

- minimising pollution and waste originating from fishing vessels, discards, catch by lost or abandoned gear, and impacts on other species and marine ecosystems.

Budgetary implications

The EU's accession to the Convention will require the payment of a yearly financial contribution to the NPFC from budget line 08.05.02 ('Compulsory contributions to Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and other International Organisations'), estimated at roughly EUR 60 000 annually. The Union's contribution could increase, depending on its future fishing in the Area of Application.

Voluntary contributions to the NPFC's budget under budget line 08.04.02 are also likely, particularly to promote scientific research. These contributions are estimated at about EUR 200 000 per year.