EU/Mauritania Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Implementing Protocol

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PURPOSE: to conclude the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Protocol implementing that Agreement.

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 Mauritania and the European Community entered into force on 8 August 2008 for a period of six years. The agreement is renewable by tacit agreement and is therefore still in force.

A previous four-year protocol for the implementation of the FPA (2015-2019) was extended twice, each time for a period of one year. It expires on 15 November 2021.

In 2018, the Commission carried out an ex-post evaluation of the 2015-2019 FPA Protocol, as well as an ex-ante evaluation of a possible renewal of the FPA 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. In addition, the renewal of the protocol would contribute to strengthening monitoring, control and surveillance, as well as improving the governance of fisheries activities in the region.

The Commission conducted negotiations with the Government of Mauritania with a view to concluding, on behalf of the European Union, a new Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and the Implementing Protocol. Following these negotiations, an agreement and a protocol were initialled by the negotiators on 28 July 2021.

The new Agreement covers a period of six years from the date of provisional application, that being the date on which it is signed by both parties. The new Implementing Protocol covers a period of five years from the date of provisional application and contains a clause providing for a review during its second year of application.

CONTENT: the purpose of the proposal is to authorise the conclusion of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Mauritania and the Protocol implementing that Agreement.

Objectives

The conclusion of the Agreement and its implementing Protocol will make it possible to **continue and strengthen the strategic partnership in the fisheries sector between the European Union and Mauritania**.

The Agreement and the Protocol will also contribute to:

- better management and conservation of fishery resources, through financial (sectoral) support for the implementation of programmes adopted at national level by the partner country, in particular the fisheries comprehensive plan, the monitoring and combating of illegal fishing and support for the small-scale fisheries sector;

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

Fishing opportunities

The new Protocol provides for the same fishing opportunities as the current Protocol during the first 2 years of application, except for a marginal adjustment of the reference tonnage for the two types of tuna vessel. Specifically, it covers the following categories:

- vessels fishing for crustaceans other than spiny lobster and crab: 5 000 tonnes and 15 vessels;

- black hake (non-freezer) trawlers and bottom longliners: 6 000 tonnes and 4 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: 14 000 tonnes (reference tonnage) and 29 vessels;

- pole-and-line tuna vessels and tuna longliners: 7 000 tonnes (reference tonnage) and 15 vessels;

- pelagic freezer trawlers: 247 500 tonnes and 19 vessels;

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

Financial contribution

For the first 2 years of application of the Protocol, the annual financial contribution for access to Mauritanian waters and fishery resources in those waters is a maximum of **EUR 57 500 000**. This amount will be reviewed before the third year of application of the Protocol.

The financial contribution to support the development of Mauritania’s sectoral fisheries policy is maintained at the overall level of the current Protocol, i.e. **EUR 16 500 000** for the entire duration of the Protocol, but is spread over a period of 5 years, taking into account the rate of uptake of the funds and amounts that remain available under the current Protocol.