EC/Gabon Fisheries Partnership Agreement: Implementation Protocol

2021/0127(NLE) - 08/11/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Fisheries adopted the report by Izaskun BILBAO BARANDICA (Renew Europe, ES) on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol implementing the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the Gabonese Republic and the European Community (2021-2026).

The committee recommended that the European Parliament **give its consent** to the conclusion of the protocol.

The Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) between Gabon and the European Union entered into force on 11 June 2007 for a period of six years. This agreement is renewable by tacit agreement and is still in force. A previous three-year protocol implementing the FPA expired on 23 July 2016.

Following the interest expressed by the fisheries sector for a renewal of the protocol, the Commission conducted negotiations with Gabon with a view to concluding a new protocol for the implementation of the FPA (2021-2026). As a result of 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 new Protocol provides for fishing opportunities for the following categories:

- 27 purse seine tuna vessels;

- 6 pole-and-line tuna vessels;

- 4 trawlers targeting mainly bottom-dwelling crustaceans, subject to authorisation depending on the results of exploratory fishing trips;

- support vessels in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the limits laid down by Gabonese law.

The European Union's annual financial contribution shall be 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.

In the explanatory memorandum accompanying the recommendation, the rapporteur stressed the importance of:

- greater transparency in order to be able to fully analyse how the funds are used in relation to sectoral support;

- the participation of women in the fisheries sector;

- ensuring the availability of data, so that the surplus of the EU fleet's target resources can be correctly calculated;

- strengthen monitoring, control and surveillance and improve proper governance of fisheries activities in the region;

- fully inform the Parliament at all stages of the procedures related to the implementation of the new protocol or its renewal.