EC/Gabon Fisheries Partnership Agreement: Implementation Protocol

2021/0127(NLE) - 14/12/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 478 votes to 148, with 71 abstentions, a legislative resolution 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.

Parliament gave its consent to the conclusion of the Protocol.

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

The Commission conducted negotiations with Gabon with a view to concluding 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 new protocol aims to grant fishing opportunities to European Union vessels in the Gabonese fishing zone in accordance with the best available scientific advice and the resolutions and recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), within the limits of the available surplus.

The new protocol provides for fishing opportunities in the following categories: (i) 27 purse seine tuna vessels; (ii) 6 pole-and-line tuna vessels; (iii) 4 trawlers mainly targeting bottom-dwelling crustaceans, subject to authorisation based on the results of exploratory fishing trips; (iv) 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.

The annual financial contribution from the European Union amounts to EUR 2 600 000, broken down as follows:

(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 aim of the new protocol is also to enhance cooperation between the European Union and the Gabonese Republic to promote a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fisheries resources in the Gabonese fishing zone and in the Atlantic Ocean, in the interest of both parties, with a view to promoting the development of a sustainable fisheries policy in all its dimensions. It provides, in particular, for vessels to be monitored via Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and for the electronic transmission of catch data.

The sectoral support available under the Protocol will help Gabon with its national fisheries strategy, including the fight against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing.

This cooperation will also help to promote decent working conditions for fishing activity and to improve research, surveillance and control of fishing activity by Gabon and the development of its fisheries sector, in particular its small-scale fisheries sector.