EU/Mauritania Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Implementing Protocol

2021/0300M(NLE) - 08/06/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 532 votes to 23, with 74 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and its implementing protocol.

The most important fisheries agreement concluded by the EU with a third country

Parliament welcomed the conclusion of a new sustainable fisheries partnership agreement, including a new protocol, between the EU and Mauritania. It stressed that the agreement strengthens environmental, economic, social, administrative and scientific cooperation in order to promote sustainable fisheries, contribute to better ocean governance, combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing), monitor and control fishing activities and contribute to the transparent implementation of the agreement and the creation of jobs in accordance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 188 on work in fishing, adopted in 2007.

Members noted the importance of the new agreement and its protocol in providing considerable **fishing opportunities for the EU fleet** and a framework for structured cooperation between the EU and Mauritania, in particular as regards sustainable fisheries management and the maintenance of the EU fleet.

The resolution stressed the commitment of the parties to promote fisheries management based on non-discrimination between the different fleets present in the fishing zone. The Commission is called upon to ensure the full implementation and enforcement of the **transparency and non-discrimination clauses** of the new agreement and its protocol.

Mauritania is urged to:

- stop the overfishing of small pelagics and put an end to the situation caused by the negative impact of the fishmeal and oil industry in the country;

- apply, where appropriate, the precautionary principle on the basis of scientific data when drawing up its **sustainable management plan for small pelagics**, which will apply to all vessels fishing in Mauritanian waters;

- inform the Commission of any public or private agreement concluded with a foreign vessel in its fishing zone, including third-country vessels;

- provide the Commission with full information on all vessels fishing in its waters, in a format that allows observers to get a clear overall picture of total fishing effort, catches by species and stock status.

While welcoming the new rules on vessel owners' fees, Members hope that improvements to the protocol, including the possibility for EU vessels to **land their catch in non-Mauritanian ports** in exceptional circumstances, will lead to a better use of available fishing opportunities in the future.

Parliament welcomed the commitment from all parties to implement the agreement transparently and in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement as regards **human rights**, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance. It called for particular attention to be paid to human rights in Mauritania, including in the fisheries sector, especially with regard to working conditions.

Sectoral support

In view of the difficulties encountered by Mauritania in using sectoral support funds, Parliament called on the Commission to provide technical assistance for the preparation and implementation of the multi-annual sectoral programme and to **strengthen administrative capacities** in Mauritania.

While stressing the importance of sectoral support in contributing to the development of the fisheries sector in Mauritania and **creating employment in coastal communities**, Parliament called on the Joint Committee to promote infrastructure projects that will lead to an **increase in local consumption of fisheries products** and to finance projects that directly benefit the entire Mauritanian artisanal fisheries value chain.

Members also called for more sectoral supported projects to support women in the Mauritanian fisheries sector, particularly those working in the food processing sector.

The resolution stressed the need to improve **data collection** on stocks in Mauritanian waters and emphasised that the implementation of the SFPA must be based on the best available scientific advice. Sectoral support should be used to support artisanal fisheries, to improve, as a matter of priority, scientific data on fish stocks, in particular on shared stocks of small pelagics such as Sardinella species and horse mackerel, and on control and surveillance activities of all fleets fishing in their fishing grounds.

Employment and working conditions

Parliament stressed the commitment to **implement the principles and rights of the ILO** for all fishers on EU vessels in order to eliminate discrimination in employment and occupation. It welcomed the employment of qualified Mauritanian fishermen on EU vessels under contracts that comply with ILO standards and provide social security coverage. It called for more efforts to be made to employ trainees in order to increase the number of qualified people in the sectoral programme.

Recalling that fishing, including artisanal fishing, is an important part of Mauritania's economy, Members called for the promotion of regional and local economic development, as well as the strengthening of coastal communities that are dependent on marine resources and must therefore be fully integrated into the management of marine and coastal areas.

Lastly, the resolution underlined that the **lack of visibility** is a common problem in all EU sustainable fisheries partnership agreements. It is therefore essential to make greater efforts to ensure the visibility and publicity of all activities related to the implementation of the Protocol in order to make the benefits of the Protocol fully visible.