EU/Mauritius Fisheries Partnership Agreement: implementing the Agreement (2022-2026). Protocol

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PURPOSE: to conclude a Protocol implementing the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Mauritius (2022-2026).

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 between the European Union and Mauritius was signed on 21 December 2012 and entered into force on 28 January 2014 for a period of 6 years. The latest protocol implementing the Fisheries Partnership Agreement covered a period of 4 years from the date of its provisional application, i.e. its signature. It was signed on 8 December 2017 and expired on 7 December 2021.

The Commission has conducted negotiations with Mauritius on the conclusion of a new Protocol to the EU-Mauritius Fisheries Partnership Agreement. As a result of these negotiations, a new protocol was initialled on 7 May 2022. The new protocol covers a period of 4 years from the date of provisional application of the protocol, i.e. the date of its signature by both parties.

The 2017-2021 Protocol was considered relevant to the needs of EU stakeholders as it provided EU ship owners with predictable access to a productive fishing area where targeted species are abundant.

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal is to authorise the **conclusion of the Protocol for the implementation** of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Mauritius (2022-2026).

The objective of the Protocol is to enable the European Union and Mauritius to work more closely together in promoting cooperation in the field of ocean economy, aquaculture, sustainable development of the oceans, maritime spatial planning, marine energy and the marine environment, maritime policy development and the blue economy, while contributing to decent working conditions in the fisheries sector.

Fishing opportunities

The new Protocol provides fishing opportunities for EU vessels in Mauritian waters. This is based on the best available scientific advice and the recommendations made by the regional fisheries organisation that manages highly migratory fish stocks, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, where applicable within the limits of the available surplus.

The Protocol provides for the following fishing opportunities: (a) 40 tuna seiners; (b) 45 surface longliners.

Financial contribution

The annual financial contribution will be **EUR 725 000**, based on:

(a) a reference tonnage of 5 500 tonnes, for which an annual amount linked to access has been set at EUR 275 000;

(b) support for the development of Mauritius' sectoral fisheries policy, amounting to EUR 275 000 per year; and

(c) support for the development of the maritime policy and the blue economy, amounting to EUR 175 000 per year.

On sectoral support, the evaluation noted that the programme had been implemented with delays and that a future sectoral support programme should aim as a matter of priority to strengthen Mauritius’ capacity to comply with its international obligations, in particular those related to scientific observations, catch sampling and port inspections. A future sectoral support programme could also help develop the national fishing sector through support to small-scale fishers and the development of a semi-industrial segment.