EU/Seychelles Agreement: access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte

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PURPOSE: to conclude an Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles on access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte.

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 agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles on access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte was signed and entered into provisional application on 20 May 2014 for a duration of 6 years. The Agreement of 2015 was tacitly renewed on 20 May 2020.

The Commission conducted negotiations with the Government of Seychelles with a view to concluding an agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles. Following these negotiations, a new agreement was initialled on 10 June 2022. The new Agreement covers a period of 6 years from the date of provisional application, that being the date on which it is signed by both parties.

As part of the evaluation of a possible future Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) and Protocol, consultations were held with Member States, industry representatives and international civil society organisations, as well as Seychelles' fisheries administration and civil society. These consultations led to the conclusion that it would be beneficial for the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles to conclude a new agreement.

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal is to **authorise the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles on access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte**.

The objective of the Agreement is to enable further strengthening of a strategic partnership with Seychelles and to align the technical and financial conditions of the Fisheries Access Agreement with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement with Seychelles and its Implementing Protocol signed in 2020, and to contribute to responsible fishing in EU waters and to developing fishery policy in Mayotte

The Agreement establishes the principles, rules and procedures governing:

- economic, financial, technical and scientific cooperation in the fisheries sector with a view to promoting sustainable fishing in Union waters to guarantee the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources and develop the fisheries sector in Mayotte;

- the conditions governing access by Seychelles fishing vessels to Union waters;

- the arrangements for the management, control and surveillance of fishing activities in Union waters with a view to ensuring compliance with the above rules and conditions; the effectiveness of measures for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and the management of fishing activities and the prevention of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The Agreement provides fishing opportunities for Seychelles vessels in the Union waters of Mayotte. These fishing opportunities are based on the best available scientific advice and respect the recommendations of the regional fisheries organisation managing the highly migratory fish stocks, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), where applicable within the limits of the available surplus.

The Agreement provides for fishing opportunities to eight Seychelles purse seiners.

Lastly, it establishes a Joint Committee responsible for monitoring the application of the Agreement. Pursuant to the Agreement, this Committee may approve certain amendments thereto. The Union's position on amendments that are proposed to the Agreement should be established by the Council. The Commission should approve the proposed amendments on behalf of the Union, unless a number of Member States constituting a blocking minority, object to them.