Fisheries: integrated framework for partnership agreements with third countries

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PURPOSE : to present a communication from the Commission on an integrated framework for Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPA) with third countries. CONTENT : the European Commission has issued a Communication on ways to improve the Fisheries Agreements concluded with third countries, particularly with developing coastal states. The Commission proposes that EU fisheries bilateral relations move from access agreements to "Partnership Agreements" which contribute to responsible fishing in the mutual interest of the Parties concerned. These Partnership agreements will ensure both that the interests of the EU distant-water fleet are protected and that the conditions to achieve sustainable fisheries in the waters of the partner concerned are strengthened. This Communication is part of the Commission proposals on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. The Commission believes that the approach proposed in this document should be progressively implemented. The agreements targeted here are those which involve the payment of a financial compensation in return for access to identified fishing possibilities for EU vessels in the waters under the jurisdiction of a third coastal state. It is felt that it is necessary to widen the scope of the EU financial contribution. This contribution mainly covers expenditure linked to management costs, the scientific assessment of fish stocks, fisheries management, control and monitoring of fishing activities, as well as expenditure for the follow-up and evaluation of the agreement In future, this contribution will be justified by the mutual interest of the two parties to invest in a sustainable fisheries policy and not just as a payment for access rights to fishing possibilities. The EU financial contribution should be regarded as an investment for the improvement of responsible and rational fishing. As these agreements are predominantly concluded with developing countries, the Commission believes that a policy dialogue in the fisheries field is necessary to help our partners develop a fisheries policy that will improve their capacity to achieve sustainable fisheries and contribute to development objectives. It is important to maintain the quality, diversity and availability of fisheries resources for food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development. To this end the issues to be identified include the assessment of the national policy for the fishing industry defined by the coastal state, the needs expressed by the partner for the sustainable development of its fishing sector, the share of the surplus that the coastal state is prepared to allocate to EU fishermen, the possible threat to the environment with a view to adopting appropriate remedial action and the concerns of civil society. Whenever possible, in the mutual interest of the parties involved, the FPAs would support measures promoting the creation of joint enterprises, transfers of know-how and technologies and investment in management capacity for the benefit of the fishing industry in accordance with the objectives and guidelines of the co-operation partnership agreement between the EU and the third country concerned.