

EC/Comoros agreement: tuna fishing, protocol for the period from 1st January 2005 to 31st December 2010

2005/0092(CNS) - 12/05/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to conclude a new Protocol setting out the tuna fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros on fishing off the Comoros for the period from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2010.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Regulation.

CONTENT : the Protocol to the Fisheries Agreement between the Community and the Comoros expired on 31 December 2004. A new Protocol was initialled by both parties on 24 November 2004 setting out the technical and financial conditions governing the fishing activities of Community vessels in Comorian waters during the period 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2010 (6 years).

The new Protocol grants fishing opportunities for 40 tuna seiners and 17 surface longliners.

The financial contribution is fixed at EUR 390 000 per year, covering an annual catch of 6 000 tonnes of tuna in Comorian waters. A large portion of this amount (60%, or EUR 234 000 per year) is earmarked, under the new partnership approach fixed in the July 2004 Council guidelines on fisheries agreements, for defining and implementing the sectoral fisheries policy in the Comoros with a view to establishing responsible fishing.

While it is in keeping with the tuna agreements concluded by the Community with certain Indian Ocean countries, this new Protocol reinforces the concept of responsible, sustainable fisheries and makes it possible to promote a partnership focussing on compliance with the laws and regulations in force under Comorian fisheries policy. New provisions have been introduced to this end:

- the exclusivity clause, which prohibits the existence of private licences or other private arrangements outside the scope of the Agreement;
- VMS requirements to reinforce checks on vessels operating in Comorian waters;
- the social clause applicable to local seamen signed on by Community vessels;
- rules on taking on board observers.

Moreover, the new Protocol aims to adjust the costs of the Agreement between the Community and shipowners. The tuna fee for fishermen has been increased from EUR 25 to EUR 35/tonne, while the Community fee has been reduced from EUR 75 to EUR 65/tonne. This reallocation, already applied in the tuna agreements in the Pacific, will gradually be applied to all tuna agreements in the Community.

In addition, the proposed Protocol sets out fishing opportunities allocated among the Member States as follows:

- Tuna seiners: Spain: 21 vessels; France: 18 vessels ; Italy: 1 vessel.

- Surface longliners: Spain: 12 vessels; Portugal: 5 vessels.

If licence applications from these Member States do not cover all the fishing opportunities set out in the Protocol, the Commission may take into consideration licence applications from any other Member State.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS :

- Budget lines concerned : 11 03 01 : International Fishing Agreements. 11 01 04 04: International Fishing Agreements, administrative expenditure.

- Period of application : 01.01.2005-31.12.2010.

- Total financial envelope : between EUR 2.578.000 according to the lowest hypothesis and EUR 4.918.00 according to the highest hypothesis over 6 years.

- Administrative expenditure included in the reference amount (management and technical assistance): EUR 238.000 over the proposed period of application.

- Administrative expenditure not included in the reference amount : EUR 77.000 per year including human resource expenditures (EUR 65.000 per year).