EC/Solomon Islands Fisheries Partnership Agreement

2005/0168(CNS) - 02/09/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: The conclusion of a Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Solomon Islands on fishing off the Solomon Islands.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Regulation

CONTENT: With the Central West Pacific said to account for 50% of total tuna catches world wide and with scientific studies indicating that the current state of tuna stock is good, the Council mandated the Commission to negotiate a bilateral tuna fishery agreements with the States in the Central West Pacific, with a view to set up a network of tuna Agreements for the EU. Negotiations with the Solomon Islands began at the end of 2003 and were concluded by July 2004. The actual Agreement enters into force once both Parties exchange notification of the correct implementation of the procedures.

The Agreement with the Solomon Islands is the first to take adopt a 'partnership' approach. The Protocol attached to the Agreement establishes the fishing possibilities and the financial contribution, which has been concluded for an initial period of three years. The terms of the Protocol are such that the concession for fishing possibilities by the Solomon Islands for EC vessels must be compatible with decisions taken in the context of the 'Palau Arrangement for the Management of the Western Pacific purse Seine Fishery.' Moreover any fishing that takes place must be in line with tuna stock assessments based on scientific evaluations.

Concerning the fishing possibilities themselves, the Protocol states that four purse seine vessels and ten surface long-liners are allowed to fish. As from the second year, the fishing possibilities may be increased at the request of the Community depending on decisions emanating from the Palau Arrangement.

The global financial contribution has been fixed at EUR 400 000 per year. Starting from the second year, for each additional purse seine vessel licence obtained the financial contribution may be increased by EUR 65 000 per year. The Solomon Islands have thus decided to allocate 30% of the annual financial contribution towards the definition and implementation of a sectoral fishery policy.

As far as the monitoring of fishing activities is concerned, the Annex to the Protocol establishes that EC vessels will have to comply with all regional provisions. EC ship-owners must pay fishing fees of EUR 13 000 per purse seine vessel and EUR 3000 for each long-liner vessel. In addition, EC ship owners are required o embark at least one seaman per vessel and contribute towards the Observers' programme.

Given that a tuna industry for the EU could be strategically important combined with the benefits to conservation that this Agreement carries, the Commission believes that the Agreement offers the EU good value for money. Based on this assertion, the Commission proposes that the Council adopt the conclusion of this new Fisheries Agreement between the EU and the Solomon Islands.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- Budget lines and headings: 110301: "International Fisheries Agreements" and 11010404: "International Fisheries Agreements, administrative expenditure".

- Overall figures: Between EUR 1 240 000 at the lowest and EUR 3 900 000 at the highest

- Period of application: The Agreement has been concluded for an initial period of three years renewable until denunciation by one of the two Parties.

- Overall multi-annual estimate of expenditure – commitment appropriations/payment appropriations:

- Technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure: EUR 40 000 for the total period.

- Administrative expenses not included in the reference amount: EUR 231 000 for a three year period, including human resources (65 000) plus other administrative costs of EUR 12 000 per year.