EC/Micronesia Fisheries Partnership Agreement

2005/0206(CNS) - 17/10/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: The Conclusion of a Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Federated States of Micronesia on fishing in the Federated States of Micronesia.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Regulation

CONTENT: Access to fishing opportunities in the Central Western Pacific is considered essential for the long-term development of EC tuna fishing. The Western Pacific offers the richest tuna fishing opportunities in the world accounting for 50% of total tuna catches worldwide. Scientific studies demonstrate that the current state of stock is so good that, for certain types of species, the maximum safe level of exploitation has yet to be reached.

The EC/FSM Fisheries Partnership Agreement establishes under what conditions EC vessels may access the waters of the FSM as well as demarcating sustainable fishing policies. The initial Agreement is to last for a period of three years A protocol and technical annex are an integral part of the Agreement.

Under the terms of the Protocol EC vessels must be compatible with Decisions taken by the Central Pacific nations in the context of the *Palau Agreement for the Management of the Western Pacific Purse Seine Fishery*. In addition, the Protocol makes clear that the EC fishing effort in the FSM exclusive economic zone must be in line with the scientific findings of tuna stock assessment reports.

As far as the EC is concerned the following possibilities apply: Six purse seine vessels and twelve surface long-liners are allowed to fish. As from the second year, fishing possibilities may be increased at the request of the Community and depending on the management decisions of the Parties to the Palau Agreement and/or other competent regional fisheries bodies. Alternatively, fishing possibilities may be reduced if, based on scientific advice, competent management bodies and institutions so require.

The global financial contribution has been fixed at EUR 559 000 per year. As 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 FSM has opted to allocate 18% of the annual financial contribution to implementing a sectoral fisheries policy in order to encourage responsible fishing in its waters.

As far as monitoring activities are concerned, the Annex to the Protocol states that EC vessels will need to comply fully with all regional provisions including a vessel monitoring system. Fines of up to EUR 15 000 per purse seine vessel and EUR 4 200 for each long-liner vessel may be imposed in case of breaching the Agreement’s provisions.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.