

EC/Morocco Fisheries Partnership Agreement: fishing opportunities and financial contribution. EU/Morocco Protocol

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PURPOSE : to conclude the Protocol between the European Union and Morocco setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement in force between the two Parties.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT : the Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND : on the basis of a mandate from the Council, the Commission opened negotiations with Morocco on the renewal of the Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and Morocco. At the end of these negotiations a draft of the new Protocol was initialled by the negotiators on 24 July 2013, which must now be concluded on behalf of the Union.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT : the interested parties were consulted during the evaluation of the Protocol for the period 2007-11. Experts from Member States were also consulted in technical meetings. These consultations led to the conclusion that it would be beneficial to maintain a fishing protocol with Morocco.

LEGAL BASIS : Article 43(2) in conjunction with Article 218(6)(a) and (7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

CONTENT : the draft decision proposes that the Council conclude the Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Morocco.

Purpose : the main aim of the Protocol to the Agreement is to provide fishing opportunities for vessels from the European Union in the waters of Morocco within the limits of the

surplus available. The aim is to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and

Morocco, thereby creating a partnership framework within which to develop a policy of sustainable fisheries and sound exploitation of fishery resources in the Moroccan fishing zone, in the interests of both parties.

Fishing Protocol and its Annex provides for fishing opportunities and the financial contribution set out in the Agreement. The Protocol sets out fishing opportunities in the following categories:

- small-scale pelagic fishing in the north: 20 seiners,
- small-scale fishing in the north: 35 bottom longliners,
- small-scale fishing in the south: 10 vessels (rods and lines),
- demersal fishing: 16 vessels (bottom longliners and bottom trawlers),
- tuna fishing: 27 vessels (pole-and-line),
- industrial pelagic fishing: 80 000 tonnes of catches, 18 vessels.

N.B. : [the previous Protocol](#), applied provisionally from 28 February 2011, **was not approved by Parliament** which considered that its cost-benefit ratio was too low, that it did not guarantee the sustainability of the stocks exploited and that it did not respect international law insofar as it did not prove that the local populations would benefit from the economic and social benefits of that Protocol.

The current draft Protocol **responds to Parliament's concerns**, notably by:

- drastically improving the cost-benefit ration of the new Protocol, under which the **fishing opportunities have increased** in relation to the previous Protocol while the European Union's financial contribution has **decreased**;
- underscoring the principle of **sustainability** as an essential condition for the activity envisaged, a principle based on sound scientific advice and reiterated several times in the text;
- requiring Morocco to provide regular, detailed reports on the **use of the financial contribution** for the fisheries sector, including the economic and social benefits on a geographical basis, and providing for a mechanism for the possible suspension of the Protocol, including in the event of violations of human rights and democratic principles.

Financial contribution: an annual financial contribution of **EUR 30 million** is provided in exchange for fishing opportunities. This contribution is based on:

- an amount of EUR 16 000 000 linked to access and
- support for the development of the sectoral fisheries policy of Morocco amounting to EUR 14 000 000.

There will also be an amount of **EUR 10 million** corresponding to the estimated amount of fees owed by ship owners under the fishing licences granted under the Fisheries Agreement.

The fishing opportunities may be reviewed by the Joint Committee by mutual agreement, provided that this review is designed to ensure the durability of Moroccan fisheries resources.

In the event of an increase, the financial contribution will be increased proportionally to the fishing opportunities and *pro rata temporis*. The total amount of the financial contribution made by the EU may not, however, exceed twice the EUR 16 million indicated in the Protocol for access to fishing zones. If the parties agree to a reduction in the fishing opportunities, the financial contribution will be reduced proportionally

The text contains other provisions regarding the distribution of fishing opportunities between different categories of boats.

Economic integration of EU operators in the Moroccan fisheries sector: the Protocol provides for specific cooperation between economic operators in the following areas:

- development of subsidiary industry related to fisheries, particularly naval construction and repair and the manufacturing of fishing gear and materials;
- promoting exchange of professional expertise and training of managers for the maritime fishing sector;
- sale of fishery products;
- marketing;
- aquaculture.

Duration of the Agreement and of the Protocol: the Agreement will apply for a period of **4 years from the date of its entry into force**.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS : the total financial envelope for the fishing Protocol is EUR **120 584 million from 2014 à 2017** (operating appropriations) including appropriations of an administrative nature financed from the envelope of specific programmes. To this amount is added the administrative cost of managing the Protocol and human resources costs in the order of EUR 680 000 for the duration of the Protocol.