Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Government of the Cook Islands

2016/2230(INI) - 14/02/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 637 votes to 34, with 20 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion on behalf of the European Union of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Government of the Cook Islands and the Implementation Protocol thereto.

As a reminder, the general objective of the EU-Cook Islands FPA/Protocol is to increase cooperation between the EU and the Cook Islands in the field of fisheries, in the interest of both parties, creating a partnership framework that will promote a sustainable fisheries policy and sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the exclusive economic zone of the Cook Islands.

Objectives to be continued: according to Parliaments opinion, the EU-Cook Islands FPA should effectively promote sustainable fisheries in the Cook Islands waters through adequate EU sectoral support, and pursue two equally important goals:

1. to provide fishing opportunities to EU vessels in the Cook Islands fishing zone, on the basis of the best available scientific advice and with due respect for the conservation and management measures of the WCPFC within the limits of the available surplus, the calculation of which should take the full development of the country's fishing capacity into account;
2. to promote cooperation between the EU and the Cook Islands with a view to a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fisheries resources in the Cook Islands fishing zone, and to contribute to the sustainable development of the Cook Islands fishing sector, through economic, financial, technical and scientific cooperation while respecting that countrys sovereign options regarding this development.

Parliament regretted that other countries in the region have not reached partnership agreements with the EU and are opening their fishing grounds up to other countries and regions in the world that on occasion employ fishing practices which do not take account of the resources available.

Development of the fishing sector: the resolution pointed out that the implementation of the EU-Cook Islands FPA and protocol, and possible revisions and/or renewals, should take account of and be aligned with the strategy established by the Cook Islands authorities for the development of the Cook Islands fishing sector, notably by making provision for:

- a contribution towards building monitoring, control and inspection capacities in relation to the fishery resources of the Cook Islands and fishing activities being carried out in that countrys waters, with a particular focus on combating IUU fishing;
- action to improve the scientific knowledge available on the status of local marine ecosystems and fishery resources in the Cook Islands waters.
- specific support for the development of local artisanal fishing and communities that rely on it.

Parliament also stressed the importance of:

- supporting sectoral development as an important aspect of contributing to the sustainability of a partner country, as it helps to enhance the countrys operational independence, underpin its development strategy and guarantee its sovereignty;
- respecting International Labour Organisation (ILO) principles as regards the employment possibilities for local seamen on board EU vessels while at the same time respecting the general principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining for workers, and non-discrimination at the workplace and in professional activity;
- providing measures to prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) fishing in the exclusive economic zone of the Cook Islands, including by improving monitoring, control and surveillance through the use of the satellite-based vessel monitoring system.

The Commission is called upon to consider applying the precautionary principle to the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy and to analyse the use of floating Fishing Aggregating Devices in the area and its influence in the tuna ecology and make proposals for their use on the basis of their findings.

Parliament should be kept immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedures relating to the Protocol and its possible renewal.