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## **DRAFT RECOMMENDATION**

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia and of the Protocol on the implementation of that Partnership Agreement  
(08974/2019 – C9-0106/2019 – 2019/0076(NLE))

Committee on Fisheries

Rapporteur: Carmen Avram

***Symbols for procedures***

- \* Consultation procedure
- \*\*\* Consent procedure
- \*\*\*I Ordinary legislative procedure (first reading)
- \*\*\*II Ordinary legislative procedure (second reading)
- \*\*\*III Ordinary legislative procedure (third reading)

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the draft act.)

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## DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

**on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia and of the Protocol on the implementation of that Partnership Agreement (08974/2019 – C9-0106/2019 – 2019/0076(NLE))**

### **(Consent)**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the draft Council decision (08974/2019),
  - having regard to the draft Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia (08984/2019),
  - having regard to the draft Protocol on the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia (09949/2019),
  - having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 43(2), Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a) (v), and Article 218(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C9-0106/2019),
  - having regard to Rule 105(1) and (4) and Rule 114(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Budgets,
  - having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Fisheries (A9-0000/2019),
1. Gives its consent to the conclusion of the agreement and of the protocol;
  2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Republic of The Gambia.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

With a total area of 11,420 sq. km. and a population of about 1.36 million people, the Republic of The Gambia is one of the smallest countries in Africa, boarded on the West by the Atlantic Ocean. However, its fishing potential is rather big. Its continental shelf area, which amounts about 4,000 sq. km. and its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), of almost 10,500 sq. km., offer the country fish species abundance, diversity and a well deserved international fame of being one of the richest fishing zones of the world, with more than 500 marine fish species recorded, experts say.

Although this resource could turn into a great opportunity for the Gambia's socio economic development, its fishing sector contributes little to the economy. It is divided in two sub-sectors (*the artisanal sub-sector*, widely dispersed throughout the country, mainly based in pirogues/canoes with outboard engines; and *the industrial sub-sector*, which comprises a relatively small number of trawlers, mainly foreign owned). According to Gambia's 2012 budget estimations, the fishery sector was one of the smallest contributors to government revenues – fishing licenses and registration fees accounted for as low as 0.1 percent of total government revenue, a report of the United Nations revealed in 2014. Yet, The Gambian Fishery Department shows the fishery sector is top listed in the food production sector, after the agriculture and livestock sectors. Thus, it plays a role of utmost significance for the Gambians, as it is the main source of animal protein for the population.

If one looks more into the causes of this paradox, it would easily understand that this situation is due, among other things, to the lack of a sustainable management of its fisheries resources, coupled with the lack of structural support, the lack of up to date scientific research and the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU). All these together act against the principles of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy and contribute to the underestimation of the Gambian fishery sector.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia in order to help the country gain, step by step, the control over its fishery resources and look towards a sustainable path into the future.

The new Agreement, for which the Council authorised the European Commission to negotiate with Gambia, on behalf of the European Union, repeals and replaces the existing Agreement, which entered into force on 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1987, but expired meanwhile. The new Protocol covers a period of six years from the date of its provisional application, renewable by tacit agreement. The main aim of the new Agreement is to provide an updated framework taking into account the priorities of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy and its external dimension, by granting fishing opportunities to European Union vessels in Gambian waters, taking into account the best available scientific advice, while promoting a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fishery resources, in the interest of both parties.

The fishing opportunities granted to the European Union vessels concern, on the one hand, the highly migratory species – 28 freezer tuna seiners and 10 pole-and-lines – and, on the other hand, the deep-water demersal fish – 3 trawlers.

Under the strict provisions envisaged by the *“Protocol on the implementation of the*

*Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia*”, during the six year period, the total financial contribution paid by the Union shall be set at EUR 3 300 000, meaning EUR 550 000 per year. An annual amount of EUR 275 000 will be paid by the European Union for access to the fisheries resources in the Gambian fishing zone, equivalent to a reference tonnage, for highly migratory species, of 3 300 tones per year, while the other half of this yearly contribution will be used, as structural support, to strengthen the sustainable management of fisheries resources and the development of the Gambian fishing sector, which meets the objectives of The Gambia’s national policy on the sustainable management of continental and maritime fishery resources.

First and foremost, the agreement covers the cooperation in the fight against IUU fishing and the promotion of the blue economy, including aquaculture. Also, a special support will be given to the artisanal fisheries sector, which is now facing difficult times.

Second of all, the rapporteur takes into account the fact that Gambia has committed to become a member of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). This is why there should be a very strong scientific cooperation on responsible fishing between the European Union and the Republic of The Gambia, with the focus on exploratory fisheries and new fishing opportunities, a good cooperation between the economic operators, and the much needed electronic exchanges of data, in order for Gambia to make important steps towards a sustainable fishing attitude. This is a serious element of the Fisheries Policy and over the years the Government of the Republic of The Gambia has placed strong emphasis on international cooperation, especially with the European Union. The Gambia does not have the requisite financial, human, and technical resources to conduct scientific surveys on its own, but relies on assistance provided by international institutions and organizations.

Last but not least, the rapporteur believes that for the Gambian fishing sector, this structural support will help the country overcome constraints such as the lack of storage facilities, the high cost of energy and poor management, which, lately, resulted in some of the fish factories going bankrupt. The EU believes in inclusion and concluding deals in order to anchor third country partners towards our standards and achieving objectives of common interest.

Taking all the above mentioned reasons into consideration, the rapporteur recommends that Parliament approves the conclusion of this SFPA and its protocol, given its importance for both the Republic of The Gambia and for EU fleets already operating in that country’s waters.