



Plenary sitting

A9-0043/2024

20.2.2024

RECOMMENDATION

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles on access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte (15048/2022 – C9-0051/2023 – 2022/0362(NLE))

Committee on Fisheries

Rapporteur: Gabriel Mato

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, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles on access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte (15048/2022 – C9-0051/2023 – 2022/0362(NLE))

(Consent)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft Council decision (15048/2022),
 - having regard to the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles on access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte (15088/2022),
 - having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Articles 43 and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a)(v), and Article 218(7), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C9-0051/2023),
 - having regard to Rule 105(1) and (4), and Rule 114(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Fisheries (A9-0043/2024),
1. Gives its consent to the conclusion of the agreement;
 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 Seychelles.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Background

Mayotte, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean and a French overseas department, enjoys at European level the status of Outermost Region since 2014. As the Treaties confer on the European Union exclusive competence for the conservation of marine biological resources under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the access to waters surrounding Mayotte for foreign fishing vessels must be governed by the European Union.

A first agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles on access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte was signed on 20 May 2014. After its entry into application on the same date (first as a provisional measure) for a duration of 6 years, this Agreement was tacitly renewed on 20 May 2020.

On the basis of the relevant negotiating directives, the Commission conducted negotiations with the Government of Seychelles with a view to concluding a new agreement on access for Seychelles fishing vessels. Following these negotiations, a new “Fisheries Access Agreement” was initialled on 10 June 2022. This new Fisheries Access Agreement covers a period of 6 years as from 10 March 2023, date of signature by both parties, signature which also initiated the provisional application of this agreement, pending its conclusion.

Besides this new Fisheries Access Agreement to the waters of Mayotte for Seychelles fishing vessels, the EU and Seychelles are also tied-up since 2020 by a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) and an accompanying implementing protocol to govern EU fishing vessels’ access to, and fishing rights in, Seychelles waters in return for EU financial and technical support to the Seychelles (cf. procedure 2020/0002(NLE)). In this SFPA, the EU and the Seychelles have also agreed on a set of mechanisms and rules designed to promote sustainable fishing, including by improving fisheries control and data collection, by stepping up the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and through closer cooperation in the regional fisheries management organisations of which both the EU and the Seychelles are members.

The new Fisheries Access Agreement

The objective of this new Agreement is to enable further strengthening of a strategic partnership with Seychelles and to contribute to responsible fishing in EU waters and developing fisheries policy in Mayotte. The technical and financial conditions of the Fisheries Access Agreement are also aligned with those the SFPA with Seychelles and its Implementing Protocol signed in 2020.

This Agreement establishes the principles, rules and procedures governing cooperation in the fisheries sector with a view to ensuring responsible fishing and the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources in waters around Mayotte based on the principle of non-discrimination between the different fleets fishing in those waters.

The conditions governing access by Seychelles fishing vessels to these EU waters are further detailed in the annex to the agreement (fishing opportunities, fishing authorisations, monitoring, and observers, etc). Under the agreement, eight Seychelles-flagged vessels (purse seiners) will

be able to fish in Mayotte's waters, beyond 24-nautical miles from its coasts. Fishing opportunities are based on the best available scientific advice (and where applicable within the limits of the surplus available) and in line with the recommendations of the regional fisheries management organisation responsible, namely the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Fees for catches will be at a rate of 135 euros per tonne of tuna caught (with an advanced payment by vessel of 13500 euros for the first 100 tonnes).

The agreement also provides for the arrangements for monitoring and controlling fisheries and for preventing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Position of the rapporteur

This fisheries Access agreement is strategic, delivering for coherence and reciprocity between the EU and the Seychelles for the sustainable exploitation of marine resources in the Indian Ocean. Through the agreement, the parties notably wish to reinforce the monitoring of fishing activities and to make sure that fishing of tuna and tuna-like species is conducted in a sustainable manner, while ensuring the protection of other species, notably pelagic sharks.

It is a balanced agreement by which Seychelles' vessels would continue their fishing activities, while it would also be beneficial to Mayotte and contribute to the development of the local fishing sector in this EU outermost region.

However, the rapporteur believes that, in long term, Mayotte - and, in general, outermost regions - should be able to develop their own fishing fleets through EU and national support. This Parliament, has repeatedly requested - in vain - that, in order to ensure the survival of the fisheries sector in the outermost regions and in compliance with the principles of differential treatment for small islands and territories mentioned in SDG 14, support is provided through the EMFAF or State Aid, on the basis of Article 349 TFEU, for the renewal of the outermost regions' artisanal fishing fleets which land all their catches in ports in the outermost regions and contribute to local sustainable development.

Outermost regions face specific challenges linked to their remoteness, topography, small markets and climate as referred to in Article 349 TFEU; yet the specific characteristics of fisheries in the outermost regions are insufficiently taken into account in the CFP. Notably, in the external policy of the CFP, strategic partnerships must take into account the interests of neighbouring and therefore affected EU regions.

Fisheries in the outermost regions is a major economic driver, a source of food sovereignty and a traditional activity that is part of the culture of these territories, which creates jobs at sea and in the processing sector and contributes to the dynamism of the tourist industry, which is an important economic engine of these regions.

In consideration of the above, the rapporteur recommends that Parliament approves the conclusion of this Fisheries Access Agreement, while reiterating its call for EU support or State Aid for the renewal and sustainable development of the fishing fleets in Mayotte and in the outermost regions more generally.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur declares under his exclusive responsibility that he did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.

PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Title	Conclusion of an Agreement between the European union and the Republic of Seychelles on access for Seychelles fishing vessels to the waters of Mayotte
References	15048/2022 – C9-0051/2023 – 2022/0362(NLE)
Date of consultation or request for consent	14.3.2023
Committee responsible Date announced in plenary	PECH 16.3.2023
Rapporteurs Date appointed	Gabriel Mato 7.12.2023
Discussed in committee	29.11.2023 23.1.2024
Date adopted	19.2.2024
Result of final vote	+: 15 –: 6 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Clara Aguilera, Pietro Bartolo, Francisco Guerreiro, Anja Hazekamp, Jan Huitema, Predrag Fred Matić, Caroline Roose, Bert-Jan Ruissen
Substitutes present for the final vote	Ska Keller, Gabriel Mato, Nikos Papandreou, Elżbieta Rafalska
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Andrus Ansip, Ana Collado Jiménez, Brice Hortefeux, Pedro Marques, Christine Schneider, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Nils Torvalds, Pernille Weiss, Rainer Wieland
Date tabled	20.2.2024

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

15	+
ECR	Elzbieta Rafalska, Bert-Jan Ruissen
PPE	Ana Collado Jiménez, Gabriel Mato, Christine Schneider, Pernille Weiss, Rainer Wieland
Renew	Andrus Ansip, Jan Huitema, Nils Torvalds
S&D	Clara Aguilera, Pietro Bartolo, Pedro Marques, Predrag Fred Matić, Nikos Papandreou

6	-
PPE	Brice Hortefeux
The Left	Anja Hazekamp
Vers/ALE	Francisco Guerreiro, Ska Keller, Caroline Roose, Nicolae Ștefănuță

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention