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Plenary sitting

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B7-0196/2011

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B7-0018/2011

pursuant to Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on the renewal of the Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Mauritania

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on behalf of the ALDE Group

B7-0196/2011

European Parliament resolution on the renewal of the Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Mauritania

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania concluded in 2006,
 - having regard to the Protocol to this fisheries agreement which is in force since 1 August 2008 and expires on 31 July 2012,
 - having regard to the statements made following the oral question in the European Parliament's plenary session of 7 March 2011,
 - having regard to EU financial contribution of €305 million between 2008 and 2012 in the framework of this FPA allowing EU vessels from 12 Member States to fish in Mauritanian waters,
 - having regard to the Parliament's Fisheries Committee's visit to Mauritania from 3 to 5 November 2010,
 - having regard to Rules 115(5) and 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Mauritania is one of the poorest countries in Africa classified as a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) and financially dependent on foreign aid and debt cancellations from entities such as the World Bank, the European Investment Bank or the European Union and also from bilateral partners such as France, Germany, Spain, the United States, Japan or China,
- B. whereas Mauritania has experienced several military coups during the last decade, the latest one in 2008, and can therefore still be considered an unstable country which also makes it also politically dependent of international recognition,
- C. whereas the political unrest in Northern Africa has also affected Mauritania where one case of politically motivated self-immolation was reported in January as well as demonstrations in the capital Nouakchott in February calling for job creation, economic and political changes and an end to corruption,
- D. whereas Mauritania has over the last years been severely affected by terrorist activities with al-Quaeda operating in the desert zone constituting the largest part of the country,
- E. whereas the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) with Mauritania provided for a financial contribution of €305 million over four years making it the most important international agreement for Mauritania because EU payments and licence fees constitute about one third of the total state income,

- F. whereas Mauritania has received a total of €65 million in financial contributions over the last six years specifically earmarked for the development of the fisheries sector policy while the sector is still being considered underdeveloped,
- G. whereas the 10th European Development Fund foresees an amount of €156 million for Mauritania between 2008-2013 of which €47 million were dedicated to the improvement of governance and € 26 million to the removal of sunken ships in Nouadhibou bay to improve the safety and industrial activities in the bay,
- H. whereas the FPA allows community vessels from 12 Member States to fish in Mauritanian waters and is economically as well as financially the most important fisheries agreement for the EU,
- I. whereas fishing is one of the most important sources of income to the Mauritanian economy accounting for about 10% of national GDP and between 35% and 50 % of Mauritanian exports while providing 29 % of the income for the national budget,
1. Calls on the Commission to provide Parliament with the ex-post evaluation on the current protocol immediately to enable its Members to give an informed judgement about whether the objectives set for this agreement were achieved and therefore whether to consent to renewing the protocol; notes that the information in this evaluation might render obsolete many of the questions raised under the following points;
 2. Notes that in 2007 the Commission had proposed to the Council to terminate the agreement¹ due to fishing opportunities being underutilised resulting in an unsatisfactory cost-benefit ratio; demands an analysis of whether this situation has significantly improved over the last three years including an explanation of whether the Commission is still of the opinion that the agreement should be terminated;
 3. Calls on the Commission to provide a summary of the findings in the annual scientific reports prepared by the Joint Scientific Committee as foreseen by the current Protocol in Article 3(4)a;
 4. Calls on the Commission to provide the joint mid-term review analysing the attainment of the performance indicators for the sectoral support as well as the final joint review as agreed on under Article 7(3) of the current Protocol;
 5. Asks the Commission whether Mauritanian authorities complied with the agreement under Article 7(4) of the current Protocol according to which they were obliged to notify the Commission each year about the sectoral budgetary allocation provided for in the Finance Act for the following year and lay out whether the content of this notification was satisfying;
 6. Urges the Commission to provide an analysis of how the annual and multiannual objectives agreed under Article 7 of the Protocol have been defined and achieved;

¹ Proposal for a Council Regulation COM(2007)782.

7. Calls on the Commission to provide the latest data on the overlap between the artisanal fishery and the EU vessels both targeting octopus, where the number of vessels had been decreased in the previous Fisheries Agreements (from 2001-2006 and 2006-2008), while Gross Reference Tonnage had increased;
8. Asks the Commission to forward relevant data on how the voluntary landing scheme, which gives an incentive of reduced fees to vessel owners when they land part of their catches in the Mauritanian port of Nouadhibou, has worked in practice and requests an assessment of whether additional measures should be considered;
9. Asks the Commission to consider including a clause into the new protocol obligating EU vessels to land a certain proportion of catches in Mauritanian ports which the national authorities consider necessary to cover the country's own demand of food supplies and jobs;
10. Calls on the Commission to pressure Mauritanian authorities to put an end to the practice of boarding vessels to fine ship owners for reportedly negligible or unjustified reasons by observers of the national control agency DSPCM which constitutes an infringement of the provisions in Chapter 6 of the current Protocol;
11. Asks the Commission which initiatives have been taken in order to obtain the inspection reports which Mauritanian authorities had agreed to forward to the local EU Delegation and proposes to include a clause into the new Protocol that provides for a reduction of contributions to the national control agency DSPCM if reports about harassments of EU vessels continue;
12. Calls on the Commission to ensure that parts of the EU contributions - as foreseen by the Protocol under Article 6(3) - will be used to develop port infrastructure, and especially the port facilities in the capital Nouakchott, to facilitate landings of catches, support local employment and improve the national infrastructure;
13. Recommends to the Commission - as part of the new Protocol - to include the option of offering training to Mauritanian experts so as to support the development of structural fisheries policy and national infrastructure;
14. Urges the Commission to counter the continuously low level of integration of fishing in the Mauritanian economy (reportedly due to the dependence on income from fisheries agreements and free licences, shortcomings in the landing, processing, support service and maintenance infrastructures as well as a lack of diversification of catches) by working more closely with Mauritanian authorities and tying the payments of EU contributions to clearer objectives to be attained in terms of sector development and infrastructure;
15. Asks the Commission to provide information on the joint think-tank which was foreseen under Article 8 of the current Protocol and which was tasked with periodically examining questions relating to the promotion of private EU investment in the Mauritanian fisheries sector and defining an action plan to achieve this end;

16. Recommends that in the upcoming negotiations the Commission strive for the instalment of a system of transferable quotas based on scientific assessments replacing the current licence-based system so as to gain better control over the overexploitation of resources;
17. Asks the Commission to explore the viability of a regional approach for all EU fisheries agreements in West Africa, which could improve the management of transboundary fish stocks and the monitoring of IUU fishing while also ameliorating the unequal negotiating positions between the EU and contracting states who are - like Mauritania - heavily dependent on EU contributions;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.