



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Development

2013/0216(NLE)

18.1.2014

OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on Fisheries

on the proposal for a Council decision on conclusion of the Protocol between the European Union and the Gabonese Republic setting out fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the two Parties currently in force (COM(2013)0465 – C7 – 2013/0216(NLE))

Rapporteur: Eva Joly

PA_Leg_Consent

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

Article 178 of the Treaty establishing the European Community states that ‘The Community shall take account of the objectives [of development cooperation] in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries.’ The Committee on Development should therefore evaluate the FPA concluded with Gabon.

The fisheries sector makes a marginal contribution to the Gabonese economy: estimated at 1.5% of GDP, it generates just 0.1% of budget revenues. Its contribution to total employment is estimated at 5%, but this is mainly of benefit to foreign nationals as there is no maritime tradition in the country. However, the fisheries sector has been identified in national policies as a potential growth area for diversifying an economy which is heavily dependent on oil (80% of exports, 60% of budget revenues and 40% of GDP).

In the period 2008-2013, fisheries was not one of the national and regional focal areas under the 10th EDF. Gabon has, however, received EDF funding under an all-ACP programme for the fisheries sector entitled *Strengthening Fisheries Management in ACP Countries (ACP FISH II)*.

The new Protocol sets an annual payment for access to Gabon’s EEZ of EUR 900 000. The amount paid by the EU (excluding additional costs paid by the vessel owners) will be EUR 45 per tonne, following an upward adjustment of the amounts paid by the EU and a downward adjustment of the amounts paid by the vessel owners. The amount allocated to the sectoral fisheries policy will rise from EUR 145 000 per year under the previous Protocol to EUR 450 000.

While EU investment under the previous agreement did have a significant leverage effect on wealth creation, it only benefited the European fisheries sector. That agreement helped to sustain 630 jobs – including 210 jobs for European nationals – but in Gabon it mainly benefited foreign nationals.

Overall, the agreement had very little impact in terms of its goal of stimulating development in the fisheries sector. The lack of adequate infrastructure, a high tax burden and the high cost of factors of production created an unattractive framework for investment in the sector. As Gabon has no fishing ports able to be used by industrial vessels and the industries capable of handling their catches, it is the neighbouring countries which have benefited from the purchase of goods and services when vessels call at ports.

The planned partnership for implementing responsible fishing practices did not work as foreseen in the Protocol.

Despite satellite monitoring of industrial vessels (VSM) and the organisation of sea patrols, IUU fishing practices remain common.

The considerable delays in forwarding the programming documents and documents for monitoring the use of sectoral support funds, partly due to a lack of capacity on the Gabonese side, are another sensitive issue.

Nevertheless, your rapporteur considers that the fisheries agreement between Gabon and the EU must be maintained. It makes it possible to use to an offshore resource which national fleets are not exploiting owing to a lack of catch capacity and a lack of land-based operations capable of making use of the catch. It provides the authorities in Gabon with programmed financial resources over the medium term, which have allowed it to begin implementing a national system to combat IUU fishing, a system that needs to be supplemented and continued at national and regional levels, as certain key aspects of fisheries management (e.g. scientific advice and compliance control) are largely transnational issues. Your rapporteur points out that fisheries partnership agreements should not simply be a legal way of allowing European vessels to have access to fish stocks in third countries. They should be a tool to promote sustainable exploitation of maritime resources. The financial contribution paid by EU taxpayers must be ring-fenced and earmarked for development goals, i.e. spent in ways that benefit the fishing communities, in order to improve their living conditions, provide training programmes, ensure safety at sea and create new local jobs. Your rapporteur considers therefore that Parliament should give its consent to the ratification of the new Protocol, subject to a number of points being taken into account.

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Fisheries, as the committee responsible, to propose that Parliament give its consent.

The Committee on Development considers that the Commission should take into account the following points during the implementation of the Protocol:

- (a) Points out that in order to improve the EU's contribution to the promotion of sustainable fishing in Gabon, in particular in terms of the contribution to food security and poverty eradication, the action taken needs to be consistent and coordinated with action funded under other EU development programmes, including the 11th EDF and the ACP Fish II programme, as well as Gabon's regional and national programmes;
- (b) Calls for the multiannual sectoral programme to focus on only a limited number of objectives, in order to make the sectoral aid more effective (contribution to the construction of fishing ports which can be used by industrial vessels, further development of health controls and of processing activities in order to give renewed impetus to exports);
- (c) Calls on the Commission to consider adopting measures to bolster the legal framework and Gabon's financial, technical and human resources with a view to discouraging IUU fishing;
- (d) Considers, with a view to improving the agreement's overall transparency, that the amounts paid under the Protocol should be set out in Gabon's finance laws, and that it should be possible to consult the balance of the 'maritime fisheries fund' account on demand;

- (e) Calls for the annual reports on use of the sectoral budget to be sent to Parliament and the Council in order to promote transparency and ensure that the budget is used appropriately.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	18.12.2013
Result of final vote	+: 17 -: 1 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Ricardo Cortés Lastra, Véronique De Keyser, Catherine Grèze, Mikael Gustafsson, Filip Kaczmarek, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Gay Mitchell, Norbert Neuser, Bill Newton Dunn, Birgit Schnieber-Jastram, Michèle Striffler, Alf Svensson, Ivo Vajgl, Daniël van der Stoep, Anna Záborská
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Kriton Arsenis, Santiago Fisas Ayxela, Isabella Lövin
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Jolanta Emilia Hibner