



2021/0127(NLE)

16.9.2021

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on Fisheries

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Implementing Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the Gabonese Republic and the European Community (2021-2026) (09172/2021 – C9-0253/2021 – 2021/0127(NLE))

Rapporteur for opinion: Miguel Urbán Crespo

PA_Leg_Consent

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) between the Gabonese Republic and the European Union entered into force in June 2007 for a period of six years and was tacitly renewed since then. Given that its accompanying implementing protocol had an expiration date in July 2016, the European Commission conducted negotiations with a view to conclude a new implementing Protocol covering a new period of five years from 2021 to 2026.

The new Protocol provides fishing opportunities for EU vessels in Gabonese waters. The European fleet will consist of 27 tuna seiners, six pole-and-line tuna vessels and four trawlers mainly targeting bottom-dwelling crustaceans, in the context of exploratory fishing.

The annual financial contribution is EUR 2 600 000, broken down as follows:

- a) an annual amount for access to the fisheries resources in the Gabonese fishing zone of EUR 1 600 000, equivalent to a reference tonnage, for highly migratory species, of 32 000 tonnes per year;
- b) support for development of the sectoral fisheries policy of Gabon, amounting to EUR 1 000 000 per year.

According to the draft Council decision, the reference tonnage has been calculated on the basis of the best available scientific advice and following the recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) within the limits of the available surplus.

The sustainable management of the fishery sector is a high priority for the Gabonese government. However, the Rapporteur believes that the budget allocated to the sectoral support is far too low to achieve the objective of promoting the development of a sustainable fisheries policy in all its dimensions.

The Rapporteur also believes that it is unclear how the sectoral support allocation will concretely benefit local coastal fishing communities and contribute to strengthening their livelihood and food security. The Rapporteur calls for more transparency on the use of sectoral funds and for better monitoring of the financed actions. In general, there is a lack of public information and public consultation on how the sectoral support allocation under the SFPA implementing protocols should be used and the Rapporteur is of the opinion that the needs of local artisanal fisheries are not sufficiently taken into account. The Rapporteur therefore calls for a more inclusive consultative process involving local fishermen, NGOs and women fish processors in the design process of the sectoral support actions.

Finally, the rapporteur believes that a precautionary approach should be applied when it comes to the provision on exploratory fishing for deep sea shrimps as it can have a detrimental impact on ecosystems and bycatch.

Based on the above arguments, Your Rapporteur takes the view that the implementing Protocol should not be approved as it fails to provide convincing arguments on its positive impact on poverty reduction and on the livelihood of local coastal communities.

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Fisheries, as the committee responsible, to recommend rejection of the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Implementing Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the Gabonese Republic and the European Community (2021-2026).