DRAFT REPORT


Committee on Fisheries

Rapporteur: João Ferreira
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The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Proposal for a Council Decision (08928/2019),
– having regard to the conclusion of the Protocol on the implementation of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (08894/2019)
– having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 43, Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a), and Article 218(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C9-0011/2019),
– having regard to its legislative resolution of ...¹ on the proposal for a decision,
– having regard to Rule 105(2) of its Rules of Procedure;
– having regard to the opinions of the Committee on Development and the Committee on Budgets,
– having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A9-0000/2019),

A. whereas the overall objective of the EU-Guinea Bissau Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) is to increase fisheries cooperation between the EU and Guinea-Bissau, in the interests of both parties, by promoting a sustainable fisheries policy and the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in Guinea-Bissau’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), in addition to the development of the Guinea-Bissau fisheries sector;

B. whereas the use of fishing opportunities under the previous SFPA is considered satisfactory in overall terms;

C. whereas the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPA is of considerable importance in the context of the SFPA concluded by the EU with third countries, and is currently the third most important in terms of the funds involved, and offers the added advantage of allowing access to mixed fisheries;

D. whereas the contribution of Guinea-Bissau’s fisheries to the country’s wealth is very low (3.5% of GDP in 2015), although the funds that it will receive through the SFPA as compensation for access to resources make a significant contribution to its national

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(0000)0000.
public finances;

E. whereas during the period covered by the Protocol, fishing opportunities will be defined in two different ways: in the first two years, fishing effort (measured in terms of gross registered tonnage), and in the last three years, total allowable catches (in tonnes); whereas this transition should be accompanied by the implementation, during the first two years of the Protocol, of an electronic catch reporting system (ERS) and the processing of catch data;

F. whereas, although the EU has had fisheries agreements with Guinea-Bissau since the early 1980s, the development cooperation component of these agreements (sectoral support) has done nothing to promote either significant development of the local fisheries sector or the development of related industries and activities;

G. whereas, in order for the Guinea-Bissau fisheries sector to develop, basic infrastructure needs to be installed, such as ports, landing sites, storage facilities and processing plants, which are still missing;

H. whereas trade in fishery products from Guinea-Bissau has been banned by the EU for many years owing to the country’s inability to comply with the sanitary measures required by the EU; whereas the delay in the analytical laboratory’s certification process (CIPA) is the main barrier to the export of fishery products from Guinea-Bissau to the EU;

I. whereas the Guinean authorities have a legitimate ambition to see an increase in the added value generated from the exploitation of fishery resources in the Guinean EEZ, since currently most of this added value does not remain within the country;

J. whereas direct employment in the fisheries sector in Guinea-Bissau has been limited, even in the case of local crew members on board vessels (they currently number fewer than when the previous protocol was concluded);

K. whereas advances have been made in the fight against IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing in Guinea-Bissau’s territorial waters, thanks to the Guinean EEZ’s improved methods of supervision, namely those allocated to FISCAP (Inspection and Control of Fishing Activities), which includes a corps of observers and fast patrol vessels, there are still flaws and shortcomings which must be overcome, including with regard to the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS);

L. whereas advances have been made in the profiling of demersal fish stocks in the Guinean EEZ, and in particular the ‘report of the campaign to assess demersal stocks in the Guinea-Bissau EEZ’ of January 2019;

M. whereas the integration of the recommendations previously made by Parliament in the current Protocol were not fully satisfactory;

N. whereas Parliament must be immediately and fully informed, at all stages, of the procedures concerning the Protocol or its renewal;

I. Notes the importance of the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPA, both for Guinea Bissau and for
EU fleets operating in Guinea-Bissau waters; emphasises that there is scope for more effective progress in terms of fisheries cooperation between the EU and Guinea-Bissau and considers that it should therefore go beyond previous protocols on the implementation of this agreement;

2. Considers that the objectives of the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPA have had differing degrees of success: while, on the one hand, the agreement has offered and provides considerable fishing opportunities for EU vessels in the Guinea-Bissau EEZ and European shipowners have made considerable use of these opportunities, on the other hand, the local fisheries sector has not, overall, developed enough or in a satisfactory manner;

3. Considers that a transition in the management of fishing opportunities (from fishing effort management to total allowable catch management) poses a challenge to this Protocol; calls on the Commission to promote, without delay, an appropriate and effective transition, which safeguards the necessary reliability and effectiveness of the ERS and the processing of catch data;

4. Supports the need for significant progress in the development of the Guinea-Bissau fisheries sector, including the fishing industry and related activities, and calls on the Commission to take all necessary measures – including a possible revision and the bolstering of the sectoral support component of the agreement, along with the creation of conditions to increase the absorption rate of this support – in order to ensure an effective reversal of the path taken in recent decades;

5. Considers that the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPA will not achieve its objectives if it does not increase added value in Guinea-Bissau as a result of the exploitation of its fishery resources; indicates as priority areas for EU support, mobilising the necessary technical and financial assistance:

   a. strengthening of institutional capacity;

   b. construction of key infrastructure for fisheries and related activities, such as ports (both industrial and artisanal), sites for landing, storing and processing fish, markets, distribution and marketing structures, quality analysis laboratories;

   c. strengthening of local operator capacity in the fisheries sector by supporting fishermen’s organisations;

   d. training of fishing professionals;

   e. recognising and enhancing the role of women in fishing, together with improving the organisation of this role;

6. Urges the European Commission and the Member States, in their cooperation and official development assistance policies, to take into account that the European Development Fund (EDF) and sectoral support provided for in the EU-Guinea-Bissau SFPA should complement each other and be fully coordinated, with a view to strengthening the local fisheries sector and to the full exercise of the country’s
sovereignty over its resources; calls on the Commission to facilitate, through the EDF and other relevant instruments, the necessary steps for the provision of infrastructure which, by reason of its scale and costs, cannot be built solely by means of sectoral support within the framework of the SFPA, for example fishing ports (both industrial and artisanal);

7. Calls on the European Commission to prioritise and urgently establish the conditions for the export of Guinea-Bissau fishery products to the EU, in particular as regards the verification of the required sanitary conditions and certification of the analytical laboratory (CIPA), since the current ban constitutes a significant barrier to the development of the local fisheries sector and, consequently, to the achievement of the SFPA objectives;

8. Supports the need to increase the contribution of the SFPA to the local creation of direct and indirect jobs, either on vessels operating under the SFPA or in fishing activities, both upstream and downstream; considers that the Member States can play a key role and be an active part in capacity-building and training efforts in order to achieve this;

9. Considers that there is a need to improve the quantity and quality of data on all catches (target and by-catch), on the conservation status of fishery resources in the EEZ of Guinea-Bissau and, in general, on the impact of the SFPA on ecosystems, and that an effort should be made to develop the capacity of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau to acquire such data; calls on the Commission to help ensure that the bodies responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Agreement, namely the Joint Committee and Joint Scientific Committee, can operate smoothly, with the involvement of artisanal fishermen’s associations, trade unions, representatives of coastal communities and Guinea-Bissau civil society organisations;

10. Considers that, in view of a possible closure of fisheries or the setting of restrictions on fisheries, in order to ensure that resources are sustainable local fishing needs should be addressed first, on the basis of sound scientific advice;

11. Supports the need, with a view to improving the sustainability of fishing activities, to improve the governance, control and surveillance of the EEZ of Guinea Bissau and to combat IUU fishing, inter alia, by stepping up the monitoring of vessels (through the VMS system);

12. Calls on the European Commission to forward to Parliament the minutes and conclusions of the meetings of the Joint Committee, the multiannual sectoral programme referred to in Article 5 of the Protocol and the results of its annual evaluations, information on the coordination of this programme with the strategic plan for the development of Guinea-Bissau’s fisheries (2015-2020), the minutes and conclusions of the meetings of the Joint Scientific Committee, as well as information on IUU fishing in the Guinean EEZ, the integration of EU economic operators in the Guinean fisheries sector (Article 10 of the Protocol) and the verification of compliance with the obligations of shipowners (e.g. in relation to the contribution in kind provided for in Chapter V of the Annex to the Protocol); calls on the Commission to present to Parliament, within the last year of application of the Protocol and before the opening
of negotiations for its renewal, a full report on its implementation;

13. Calls on the European Commission to better integrate the recommendations now made in the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPA, taking them into account, inter alia, in the procedures for the renewal of the Protocol;

14. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of Guinea-Bissau.