



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Development

2012/0229(NLE)

30.4.2013

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on Fisheries

on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community, on the one hand, and the Republic of Kiribati, on the other (13331/2012 – C7-0036/2013 – 2012/0229(NLE))

Rapporteur: Norbert Neuser

PA_Leg_Consent

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

Kiribati is a remote Pacific nation made up of 33 widely dispersed islands (21 inhabited). While the total land area is only 726 km², the related exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is the largest EEZ of the Pacific islands countries.

Kiribati is a democratic republic; its economy faces significant constraints common to other islands atoll states. Its GDP is expanding by an estimated 2-3% per annum. GDP per capita is one of the lowest of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) nations at 1,047 euros, and Kiribati is classified as a least developed ACP state. Challenges to economic development include size, remoteness and geographical fragmentation, infertile soils, limited exploitable resources and an expanding population. Kiribati's Development Plan 2008-2011 focused on improving the economic environment in the outer islands, strengthening access to health services and addressing climate change.

Kiribati relies heavily on licence fees from distant water fishing nations that provide 23-30% of government revenue and remittances from Kiribati citizens employed abroad, mainly as seafarers. Fishing is also an important subsistence activity, with over 80% of households involved in fishing. The fishing sector contributes around 10% to GDP.

While Kiribati benefits from regional development initiatives, fisheries remain outside the 10th EDF Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for Kiribati. Fisheries-specific support is instead provided through the sectoral policy support component of the fisheries partnership agreement in force. While there is presently no trade in fishery products between Kiribati and the EU, the country has future aspirations in trading fresh tuna loins.

Assessment of the proposal for a new Protocol

The main features of the proposed new Protocol go along the lines of the expired 2007-2012 Protocol. The ex-post assessment commissioned by the Commission to an external contractor shows the strengths and weaknesses of the previous protocol and is therefore useful to assess the current proposal.

As regards fishing possibilities, the proposed protocol provides for 4 purse seine and 6 long-line fishing authorisations. The annual amount for the access to Kiribati EEZ is set at EUR 975 000 equivalent to a reference tonnage of 15 000 tonnes of tuna per year. An amount of EUR 350 000 is allocated for sectoral fisheries policy.

The annual amount paid by the EU (thus excluding additional fees paid by the shipowners) for the access to Kiribati EEZ remains stable at EUR 65 per tonne, but the amount allocated for the sectoral fisheries policy almost double, from EUR 62 400 a year in the previous protocol to EUR 116 666 a year in the proposed one.

The ex-post assessment shows some areas of concern of the previous protocol, including: the failure of the Joint Committee meetings to take place until 2011; the slow payments in recent years for the financial support for the sectoral policy; the failure by Kiribati to supply inspection certificates and observer reports to shipowners; and the lack of any real impetus

towards joint enterprises or local landings for processing.

The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA)

Your rapporteur is deeply concerned about the non-respect of the proposed Protocol with some provisions in the PNA, which is a binding regional agreement signed by eight developing Pacific island countries, including Kiribati, with the main objective of coordinating and harmonising the management of their fisheries, upon which they are highly dependent.

The PNA has agreed to several implementing protocols and arrangements which lay out agreed conditions to be applied to all foreign fishing vessels fishing in the EEZs of PNA members. These include conditions such as catch retention provisions, FAD closures, 100% observer coverage, or the mandatory use of the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS), an effort management mechanism developed by the parties. The VDS provides for Party Allowable Effort days allocated to PNA countries, and agreed that a minimum fee of US\$ 5000 per fishing day that shall be applied to foreign fishing vessels from 2012 onwards.

The fact that the protocol agreed between the EU and Kiribati does not comply with the VDS is causing important tensions, both between the EU and some Pacific island countries and between Kiribati and the other Pacific island countries, with the latter voicing concerns about the EU acting in bad faith and breaking regional solidarity.

Your rapporteur is of the view that Pacific island countries' cooperation in the management of the tuna fisheries taking place in their waters must be encouraged and not undermined. Tuna is almost the only resource these islands economies benefit from. For this reason, the joint management and conservation of tuna resources is of paramount importance to their very survival. This implies that fisheries agreements signed by third countries, including the EU, with these countries should fully respect the provisions of regional and sub-regional agreements and arrangements.

By signing the proposed protocol with the EU, Kiribati would be infringing the PNA. At the same time, the EU might be acting against the principles of policy coherence for development and undermining its own credibility as a cooperation actor in the whole region by not ensuring that its fisheries policies are consistent with those agreed by the signatories of the PNA, thus sapping regional integration.

Therefore, your rapporteur proposes that Parliament decline to give its consent to the conclusion of this Protocol. He calls on the Commission to re-negotiate the Protocol incorporating the provisions of any regional and sub-regional agreement or arrangement binding on Kiribati.

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