



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2018)0083

EU-Comoros fisheries partnership agreement: denunciation (Resolution)

European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 15 March 2018 on the draft Council decision denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros (14423/2017 – C8-0447/2017 – 2017/0241(NLE) – 2017/2266(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft Council decision (14423/2017),
 - having regard to the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros¹,
 - having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 43 and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0447/2017),
 - having regard to its legislative resolution of 15 March 2018² on the draft decision,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, amending Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1936/2001 and (EC) No 601/2004 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1093/94 and (EC) No 1447/1999³ ('the IUU Regulation'), particularly Article 8(8) thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 99(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries and the opinion of the Committee on Development (A8-0055/2018),
- A. whereas the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros (hereinafter 'the Comoros') provides for its termination by either party in the event of serious circumstances, such as failure to comply with undertakings made by the parties with regard to combating illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;

¹ OJ L 290, 20.10.2006, p. 7.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0082.

³ OJ L 286, 29.10.2008, p. 1.

- B. whereas illegal fishing is a major threat to global marine resources, given that it depletes fish stocks, destroys marine habitats, puts honest fishers at an unfair disadvantage, and destroys the livelihoods of coastal communities, particularly in developing countries;
- C. whereas the EU should take all possible steps to ensure that sustainable fisheries agreements entered into with third countries bring mutual benefits to the EU and the third countries concerned, including their local populations and their fisheries sectors;
- D. whereas the overall aim of the Protocol concluding the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros was to enhance fisheries cooperation between the EU and the Comoros in the interests of both parties, by establishing a partnership framework within which to pursue a sustainable fisheries policy while exploiting fishery resources in a sustainable way in the Comorian exclusive economic zone, as well as to secure an appropriate share, corresponding to the interests of the EU fleets, of the fishing surpluses available;
- E. whereas the first fisheries agreement between the EEC and the Comoros dates back to 1988 and whereas the fleets of EEC/EU Member States have since then been given access to fishing opportunities under a series of implementing protocols;
- F. whereas according to the UNCTAD report entitled 'Fishery Exports and the Economic Development of Least Developed Countries', sectoral cooperation has not progressed beyond a rudimentary state, with very little impact on the fishing industry, landing conditions, monitoring and surveillance capacity, scientific development, or the technical training of fishers and observers; whereas the price that the EU pays to the Comoros per tonne of fish (tuna) is roughly 15 % of the estimated wholesale price per tonne;
- G. whereas the Comoros was notified on 1 October 2015 of the possibility of its being identified as a non-cooperating third country for failure to exert adequate control of vessels registered under the Comorian flag; whereas, having been identified as a non-cooperating country in May 2017 and listed as such in July 2017 by the EU, which issued a 'red card', the country has still failed to take the corrective measures needed to resolve the problems identified and to combat IUU fishing;
- H. whereas the previous protocol to the fisheries agreement with the Comoros expired on 30 December 2016 and was not renewed because the Comoros had failed to give any undertaking to combat IUU fishing; whereas the protocol was endowed with a financial envelope of EUR 600 000 a year, of which EUR 300 000 were earmarked for the support of the fisheries policy of the Comoros with a view to promoting sustainability and sound management of fisheries resources in its waters;
- I. whereas the EU is firmly committed to combating illegal fishing and any form of business stemming from it, and that commitment is set out in the IUU regulation;
- J. whereas the EU and its Member States are pursuing cooperation with the Comoros in several sectors; whereas the EU's denunciation of the fisheries Partnership Agreement can be reversed (if the necessary corrective measures are taken) and whereas the denunciation of this agreement does not rule out future negotiation of another agreement or any other form of partnership in the fisheries sector;

- K. whereas combating IUU fishing does not depend solely on identifying non-cooperating third countries, but, on the contrary, requires that ways be found to remedy situations brought to light; whereas unless it receives outside assistance, the Comoros will be unable to improve its marine management policies for fishery resources in particular, including as regards landing conditions, monitoring and surveillance capacity, scientific development, and the technical training of fishers and observers;
- L. whereas the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) incorporated, for the first time, a goal related to the conservation and sustainable use of seas and marine resources (Goal 14);
1. Regrets that the Comoros has failed to take the corrective measures needed to resolve the problems identified and to combat IUU fishing, despite being warned by the EU;
 2. Reiterates the importance of effective flag state control, the absence of which is a root cause of IUU fishing; considers that the Comoros should meet its obligations under international law with respect to the supervision and control of vessels flying its flag; strongly believes that this lack of supervision and authorisation to fish enables such vessels to engage in IUU fishing with impunity;
 3. Takes the view that the Comoros should remain engaged with the EU and seize this opportunity to put in place the measures necessary to improve its ability to address illegal fishing;
 4. Deplores the fact that in almost 30 years of fisheries agreements between the EU and the Comoros – one component of which has been geared to cooperation and support for the development of the Comorian fisheries sector – it has not proved possible to achieve more tangible results in the sector's development, including in fields such as monitoring and surveillance capacity, scientific development, and technical training for fishers and observers;
 5. Maintains that the available development cooperation instruments, especially the European Development Fund (EDF), need to be dovetailed more effectively with overall support for capacity development in the fisheries sector;
 6. Recalls that the Comoros has a duty, under the fisheries Partnership Agreement signed with the EU and other international instruments, as well as within the framework for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, to respect the principles of good governance in fisheries and responsible fishing, maintain fish stocks and preserve the marine ecosystem in its exclusive economic zone;
 7. Stresses the need to fight IUU fishing globally and to create incentives for states to take their responsibilities seriously and implement necessary reforms in their fisheries sectors;
 8. Maintains that combating IUU fishing must not hinge entirely on identifying non-cooperating third countries and that, in order truly to fight illegal fishing in all its forms, it is necessary to find ways of helping countries, in particular small island developing states, of which the Comoros is one, so as to enable them to alter their marine management policies;
 9. Agrees with the Commission and the Council on the need to apply the measures

referred to in Article 38(8) of the IUU Regulation for the denunciation of any standing bilateral fisheries agreement with the Comoros, which provides for termination of the agreement in the event of failure to comply with undertakings made by it with regard to combating IUU fishing;

10. Notes the other consequences referred to in Article 38(8) of the IUU Regulation, concerning prohibitions on chartering, reflagging and private agreements, among others;
11. Maintains, however, that such denunciation must not mark the end of cooperation between the EU and the Comoros in the fisheries sector; urges the Commission to seek to ensure that this relationship can be reactivated as soon as possible, proceeding from the premise that fishing communities and small-scale artisanal fisheries should be considered central to the country's development and that, to that end, investment and technical assistance should be promoted in the following areas:
 - fisheries administration and governance system, legislation, institutional machinery, capacity-building for human resources (fishers, scientists, inspectors and others), and enhancement of the commercial and cultural value of traditional Comorian gear and fish;
 - monitoring and scientific capacities, coastal protection capacity, and capacities for inspection, surveillance, and quality control;
 - setting up facilities for refrigerating, distributing, and processing fish;
 - construction and upgrading of landing and security infrastructure at ports and harbours;
 - renewal of the Comorian small-scale fleet to improve safety, its ability to remain at sea, and fishing capacity;
12. Calls for the inclusion of a clause whereby, should the Comoros remedy its shortcomings, the procedure would be stopped and the red card withdrawn, thus enabling the EU fleet to return;
13. Calls on the Commission to take the appropriate steps to bring about a return to normal by improving the effectiveness of measures to combat IUU fishing and letting the EU fleet go back to the fishing zone once the terms of a new protocol have been renegotiated;
14. Calls on the Commission and Council, each within its remit, to keep Parliament fully informed without delay of such developments as might occur in this process;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Union of the Comoros.