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*Committee on Development*

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**2013/0315(NLE)**

9.10.2013

# **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 between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement in force between the two Parties (COM (2013)0648 - C7-0000/0000 - 2013/0315(NLE))

Rapporteur: Cristian Dan Preda

PA\_Leg\_Consent

## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Fisheries Partnership Agreement concluded between the EU and Morocco in February 2007 is particularly important in many respects. First, owing to its economic relevance: this agreement is the second most important fisheries agreement concluded by the EU with a developing country, after the fisheries agreement with Mauritania, accounting for around one quarter of DG MARE's budget allocation for bilateral fisheries agreements. Moreover, this agreement has been concluded between two parties that share common borders and have decided to reinforce their political relations and move towards a progressive integration of their economies. The Association Agreement that entered into force in the year 2000 and the Advanced Status granted to Morocco in 2008 demonstrate the will of both parties to further deepen their bilateral relations.

The technical and financial provisions applicable to the EU fishing vessels, as well as the financial contribution under the agreement, are included in the Protocol annexed to the Agreement. The previous protocol expired on 27 February 2011. The Protocol that should have followed, applied provisionally from 28 February 2011, was not approved by Parliament which considered that its cost-benefit ratio was too low, that it did not guarantee the sustainability of the stocks exploited and that it did not respect international law insofar as it did not prove that the local populations would benefit from the economic and social benefits of that Protocol.

On the basis of a mandate from the Council, the European Commission has opened negotiations with the Kingdom of Morocco on the renewal of the Protocol. A draft of the new Protocol was initialled on 24 July 2013, after 6 rounds of difficult negotiations.

The Rapporteur welcomes the new proposal that responds to a large extent to the criticisms formulated by Parliament over the previous text:

1. The cost-benefit ratio of the new Protocol is drastically improved as the fishing opportunities have increased in relation to the previous Protocol, while the EU's financial contribution has decreased.

The financial contribution of 30 million euros allows EU fishing vessels to obtain a maximum of 126 licenses in the categories of small-scale fishing, demersal fishing and tuna fishing, and for a maximum of 80 000 tonnes of catches for industrial pelagic fishing. Almost half of the financial contribution, that is, 14 million euros, will be earmarked for the development of the fisheries sector in Morocco, more specifically for the Halieutis programme aimed at reinforcing the sustainability, performance and competitiveness of this economic sector in the period 2010-2020.

2. The principle of sustainability becomes an essential condition of the fishing activities. In order to defend their respective positions during the negotiations, both parties took fully into account scientific reports on the state of the fish stocks and their likely evolution during the first years of implementation of the agreement as well as on the assessment of the level of utilisation of the fishing opportunities provided for in the previous Protocol. In order to better control quantities caught by EU fishing vessels the Protocol makes provision for joint missions, embarkment of inspectors on-board

EU vessels and the reinforcement of satellite monitoring system.

3. Morocco is required to provide regular and detailed reports on the use of the financial contribution for the fisheries sector development, including regarding the economic and social benefits for the local populations on a geographical basis (Article 6). Although a similar provision appeared in the previous text, it is now considerably strengthened by reporting requirements at three levels: progress reports and completion reports for individual projects, as well as a final report for the implementation of the sectoral support under the Protocol. The EU, which is represented in the Joint Committee, would thus gain considerable oversight on the way sectoral support is used and the extent to which it benefits local populations. This is reinforced by the fact that the payment of the financial contribution by the EU is made in instalments and is conditioned by the analysis of the results achieved.

Furthermore, provisions on compulsory employment of Moroccan fishermen have been improved so as to allow for more Moroccan fishermen to work on-board EU fishing vessels.

Last but not least, the new text accommodates Parliament's concerns regarding respect for human rights. A reference to the respect of democratic principles and fundamental human rights, as provided for in Articles 1 and 2 of the Association Agreement with Morocco, is included in Article 1 of the Protocol that deals with the General Principles, and therefore applies to the whole text. This Article, in conjunction with Article 8 setting up a suspension mechanism, allows for the suspension of the Agreement in cases of violations of human rights and democratic principles.

Your rapporteur would like to stress that the approval of this Protocol will reinforce the partnership with this country and contribute to the development of local populations, including in the South. Morocco is the first country in our neighbourhood that was awarded an advanced status 5 years ago, negotiations for a DCFTA with Morocco are on-going, and the country remains one of our closest allies in a region in turmoil. In addition, this Protocol offers excellent possibilities for the development of a sector that is crucial for Morocco's economy. We should seize this opportunity to work constructively with our Moroccan partner to further our shared goals and values.

For all these reasons, the Rapporteur recommends that the Parliament should give its consent to conclusion of the Protocol.

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