

Tuesday 14 February 2017

P8\_TA(2017)0020

## **EU-Cook Islands sustainable fisheries partnership agreement (Resolution)**

**European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 14 February 2017 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion on behalf of the European Union of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Government of the Cook Islands and the Implementation Protocol thereto (07592/2016 — C8-0431/2016 — 2016/0077(NLE) — 2016/2230(INI))**

(2018/C 252/05)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the draft Council decision (07592/2016),
  - having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 43, Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a)(v), and Article 218(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0431/2016),
  - having regard to its legislative resolution of 14 February 2017 <sup>(1)</sup> on the draft decision,
  - having regard to the ex ante evaluation report of June 2013 on the fisheries partnership agreement and protocol between the European Union and the Cook Islands,
  - having regard to the strategic guidelines drawn up by the Cook Islands authorities on the development of the local fisheries sector, in particular those contained in the document ‘Cook Islands Offshore Fisheries Policy’,
  - having regard to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework, in particular SDGs 1, 2, 9, 10 and 14,
  - having regard to the conclusions and recommendations of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) 12th Scientific Committee meeting for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean,
  - having regard to Rule 99(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A8-0015/2017),
- A. whereas the Commission has negotiated a new ‘Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement’ between the European Union and the Cook Islands (EU-Cook Islands FPA), and the implementation protocol thereto, with the Cook Islands Government, covering a period of eight and four years respectively;
- B. whereas this is the first EU-Cook Islands FPA, which guarantees a European presence in the waters of the eastern Pacific following the non-renewal of the agreement with Kiribati (and the agreements signed but not implemented with Micronesia and the Solomon Islands);
- C. whereas the general objective of the EU-Cook Islands FPA/Protocol is to increase cooperation between the EU and the Cook Islands in the field of fisheries, in the interest of both parties, creating a partnership framework that will promote a sustainable fisheries policy and sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Cook Islands;
- D. whereas our presence in the region should serve to promote a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of resources, guaranteeing the proper management of Pacific tuna resources;
- E. whereas the EU-Cook Islands FPA is based on the best available scientific advice, respecting the conservation and management measures of the WCPFC within the limits of the available surplus;

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<sup>(1)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2017)0019.

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- F. whereas problems exist in relation to inspection and control, and whereas illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a problem that is difficult to overcome, bearing in mind the scattered nature of territory and resources;
- G. whereas there are various vessels from EU Member States in the Western and Central Pacific region and the remaining fisheries agreements signed in the region have expired;
- H. whereas a commitment has been given not to grant other non-European fleets more favourable conditions than those provided for in the Agreement, and whereas the Agreement contains the Cotonou clause on human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law;
- I. whereas the EU-Cook Islands FPA is aimed at promoting more effective and sustainable development of the fisheries sector in the islands, as well as that of related industries and activities, in line with the objectives of the Cook Islands national fisheries policy, particularly in terms of supporting scientific research and artisanal fishing, increasing landings at local ports, boosting monitoring, control and surveillance capacity in relation to fishing activities and combating IUU fishing, and in line with the SDG framework;
- J. whereas the contributions intended to support the development of the Cook Islands' fisheries policy, ranging between 47,6 % and 50 % of the total to be transferred, amount to a major contribution in percentage terms;
- K. whereas stocks of bigeye tuna have been in decline since 2012, whereas, as a consequence of this, the WCPFC introduced a management measure that will be renegotiated in 2017, and whereas purse seine catches fell by 26 % in 2015 by comparison with 2014; whereas, furthermore, the Cook Islands waters are regarded as a 'shark sanctuary', even though it should be stressed that this is not a target species for the European fleet fishing in those waters under the new agreement;
- L. whereas EU longliner catches have tended to be located in the warmer waters to the south of the Cook Islands; bearing in mind the requirements imposed by the Cook Islands' shark conservation regulation; whereas the ex ante assessment found that there would be no interest in the future for EU longliners to fish in the Cook Islands EEZ;
- M. whereas the Cook Islands are highly dependent on food imports;
1. Takes the view that the EU-Cook Islands FPA should effectively promote sustainable fisheries in the Cook Islands waters through adequate EU sectoral support, and pursue two equally important goals: (1) to provide fishing opportunities to EU vessels in the Cook Islands fishing zone, on the basis of the best available scientific advice and with due respect for the conservation and management measures of the WCPFC within the limits of the available surplus, the calculation of which should take the full development of the country's fishing capacity into account; and (2) to promote cooperation between the EU and the Cook Islands with a view to a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fisheries resources in the Cook Islands fishing zone, and to contribute to the sustainable development of the Cook Islands fishing sector, through economic, financial, technical and scientific cooperation while respecting that country's sovereign options regarding this development;
  2. Takes notes of the conclusions of the ex ante evaluation report of June 2013 on the EU-Cook Islands FPA and protocol, according to which previous FPAs/Protocols in the region (Kiribati, Solomon Islands) have not made any meaningful contribution to the development of the local fishing sectors, particularly in terms of joint enterprises (with shared investments) and the development of local processing capacity; takes the view that the EU-Cook Islands FPA should contribute insofar as is possible to local fishing sector development by guaranteeing the supply of fish needed for domestic consumption and, thereby matching the objectives announced for the new generation of EU fisheries agreements and those of the SDG framework;
  3. Regrets that other countries in the region have not reached partnership agreements with the EU and are opening their fishing grounds up to other countries and regions in the world that on occasion employ fishing practices which do not take account of the resources available, instead of opting for an agreement with the EU which promotes sustainable fisheries and provides sectoral support;

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4. Welcomes the inclusion of the obligation that the Cook Islands render public the existence of any agreement authorising foreign fleets to fish in its waters but regrets the lack of precision on the overall effort exerted, as has been required under certain other agreements entered into by the EU;
5. Points out that the implementation of the EU-Cook Islands FPA and protocol, and possible revisions and/or renewals, should take account of and be aligned with the strategy established by the Cook Islands authorities for the development of the Cook Islands fishing sector, notably by making provision for:
  - a contribution towards building monitoring, control and inspection capacities in relation to the fishery resources of the Cook Islands and fishing activities being carried out in that country's waters, with a particular focus on combating IUU fishing;
  - action to improve the scientific knowledge available on the status of local marine ecosystems and fishery resources in the Cook Islands waters;
  - specific support for the development of local artisanal fishing and communities that rely on it, increasing its contribution to the local economy, helping to improve safety on board and fishermen's incomes, and supporting the development of local fish processing and marketing infrastructure, whether to supply the domestic market or for export;
6. Considers that support for sectoral development is an important aspect of contributing to the sustainability of a partner country, as it helps to enhance the country's operational independence, underpin its development strategy and guarantee its sovereignty;
7. Considers that employment possibilities for local seamen on board EU vessels under the partnership agreements do meet international standards; reiterates the need to respect ILO principles and promote the ratification of ILO Convention No 188 while at the same time respecting the general principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining for workers, and non-discrimination at the workplace and in professional activity; points out, however, that in view of the shortage of skilled seamen for tuna vessels, the Cook Islands' authorities have not requested embarkation in the EU fleet;
8. Takes the view that the EU-Cook Islands FPA and the relevant protocol should allow bilateral cooperation on the fight against illegal fishing to be strengthened and provide the Cook Islands with the means to finance surveillance programmes, and believes that measures to prevent IUU fishing in the exclusive economic zone of the Cook Islands should be reinforced, including by improved monitoring, control and surveillance through the use of the satellite-based vessel monitoring system, logbooks, inspectors and the implementation of decisions by regional fisheries organisations;
9. Considers it desirable to improve the quantity and accuracy of data on all catches (targeted and bycatch) and, more generally, the conservation status of fishery resources so that the impact of the Agreement on the marine ecosystem and on fishing communities can, with the involvement of fishermen's associations, be gauged more accurately; urges the Commission to promote the regular and transparent functioning of the bodies responsible for monitoring the application of the Agreement, and a strengthening of scientific assessments by the WCPFC;
10. Calls on the Commission, accordingly, to consider applying the precautionary principle to the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy and to analyse the use of floating Fishing Aggregating Devices in the area and its influence in the tuna ecology and make proposals for their use on the basis of their findings;
11. Calls on the Commission to inform Parliament in a timely manner about the forthcoming meetings of the Joint Committee and to forward to Parliament the minutes and conclusions of meetings of the Joint Committee as provided for in Article 6 of the Agreement, the multiannual sectoral programme as referred to in Article 3 of the Protocol and the findings of the corresponding annual evaluations, to enable representatives of Parliament to attend Joint Committee meetings as observers, and to promote the participation of Cook Islands fishing communities;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Council, acting within the limits of their respective powers, to keep Parliament immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedures relating to the Protocol and its possible renewal, pursuant to Article 13(2) of the TEU and Article 218(10) of the TFEU;

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13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Cook Islands.

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