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P9_TA(2020)0137

Protocol on the implementation of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and Guinea-Bissau (2019-2024) (Resolution)**European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 18 June 2020 on the draft Council Decision on the conclusion of the Protocol on the implementation of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (2019-2024) (08928/2019 — C9-0011/2019 — 2019/0090M(NLE))**

(2021/C 362/22)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft 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) ('the Protocol'),
 - 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 (C9-0011/2019),
 - having regard to Article 31(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC (Common Fisheries Policy) ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 April 2016 on common rules in respect of application of the external dimension of the CFP, including fisheries agreements ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to its legislative resolution of 18 June 2020 ⁽³⁾ on the draft decision,
 - having regard to Rule 105(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Development,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A9-0013/2020),
- A. whereas the overall objective of the EU-Guinea Bissau sustainable fisheries partnership agreement (SFPA) is to enhance fisheries cooperation between the EU and Guinea-Bissau, in the interests of both parties, by promoting a sustainable fisheries policy and the sound and sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in Guinea-Bissau's fishing zone, in addition to the development of the Guinea-Bissau fisheries sector and its blue economy;
- B. whereas the use of fishing opportunities under the previous SFPA is considered satisfactory in overall terms;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 58, 15.2.2018, p. 93.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0136.

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- C. whereas the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPA is of considerable importance in the context of the SFPAs 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 being one of only three agreements that allow 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 financial compensation for access to resources will make a significant contribution to its national public finances;
- E. whereas compared to the previous Protocol, the EU's financial contribution has been increased from EUR 9 million to EUR 11,6 million per year as regards the annual amount for access to fishery resources and from EUR 3 million euros to EUR 4 million per year as regards EU support for Guinea-Bissau's sectoral fisheries policy;
- F. 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 (GRT)), 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;
- G. whereas during the first period covered by the Protocol, the fishing opportunities granted to EU fleets are as follows: 3 700 GRT for shrimp freezer trawlers, 3 500 GRT for fin-fish and cephalopods freezer trawlers and 15 000 GRT for small pelagic trawlers, 28 tuna freezer seiners and longliners, and 13 pole-and-line tuna vessels; whereas during the second period, the fishing opportunities granted to EU fleets are as follows: 2 500 tonnes for shrimp freezer trawlers, 11 000 for fin-fish freezer trawlers, 1 500 tonnes for cephalopod freezer trawlers and 18 000 tonnes for small pelagic trawlers, 28 tuna freezer seiners and longliners, and 13 pole-and-line tuna vessels;
- H. whereas the first fisheries agreement between the European Economic Community and Guinea-Bissau dated back to 1980; whereas the previous protocol to the agreement expired on 23 November 2017; whereas the performance of the development cooperation component of these agreements (i.e. sectoral support) has not been globally satisfactory; whereas, notwithstanding, progress has been recorded in fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance and sanitary inspection capacity, as has Guinea-Bissau's participation in regional fisheries bodies; whereas sectoral cooperation needs to be enhanced in order to better promote the development of the local fisheries sector and the related industries and activities so as to ensure that a greater proportion of the added value created by the exploitation of the country's natural resources remains in Guinea-Bissau;
- I. 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, in an effort to attract landings of fish caught in the waters of Guinea-Bissau;
- J. whereas 2021 will see the start of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030); whereas third countries must be encouraged to play a key role in the acquisition of knowledge;
- K. 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 exporting of fishery products from Guinea-Bissau to the EU; whereas the Guinean authorities and the Commission are working together in the certification process in order to lift the ban;
- L. whereas there is a need to ensure that a greater proportion of the added value generated from the exploitation of fishery resources in the Guinean fishing zone remains in the country;

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- M. whereas direct employment in the fisheries sector in Guinea-Bissau has been limited, even when it comes to employing local crew members on board vessels (currently, a lower number work on these vessels than when the previous Protocol was concluded) or women, whose livelihoods and jobs are contingent on the fisheries sector;
- N. whereas compared to the previous Protocol, the number of seamen to be signed on in the EU fleet increased significantly; whereas EU vessels owners shall endeavour to sign on additional Guinean seamen; whereas the Guinea-Bissau authorities are to draw up and keep updated an indicative list of qualified seamen who are candidates to be signed on by EU vessels;
- O. 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 exclusive economic zone's (EEZ) 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; whereas there are still flaws and shortcomings which must be overcome, which include matters relating to the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS);
- P. 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;
- Q. whereas Guinea-Bissau is one of 13 countries under the scope of the project 'Improved regional fisheries governance in western Africa (PESCAO)' adopted by Commission Decision C(2017) 2951 of 28 April 2017, which, among other objectives, aims to strengthen the prevention of and responses to IUU fishing by improving monitoring, control and surveillance at national and regional level;
- R. whereas the integration of the recommendations previously made by Parliament in the current Protocol were not fully satisfactory;
- S. whereas Parliament must be duly informed in good time and at all stages of the procedures concerning the Protocol or its renewal;
1. Notes the importance of the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPAs, both for Guinea Bissau and for EU fleets operating in the Guinea-Bissau fishing zone; emphasises that there is scope for more effective progress in terms of fisheries cooperation between the EU and Guinea-Bissau and reiterates its call on the Commission to take every step required to go beyond previous protocols on the implementation of this agreement to ensure that this SFPAs leads to satisfactory levels of development of the local fisheries sector in global terms, and should be consistent with the objectives referred to in the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
 2. Considers that the objectives of the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPAs have had differing degrees of success: while the agreement has offered and provides considerable fishing opportunities for EU vessels in the Guinea-Bissau fishing zone and European ship-owners have made considerable use of these opportunities, the local fisheries sector has not, overall, developed enough or in a satisfactory manner;
 3. Stresses that, in its Article 3, the Protocol contains a non-discrimination clause whereby Guinea-Bissau undertakes not to grant more favourable technical conditions to other foreign fleets operating in Guinea-Bissau's fishing zone that have the same characteristics and target the same species; calls on the Commission to closely follow EU fisheries agreements with third countries that are in Guinea-Bissau's fishing zone;
 4. Welcomes the contribution of EU vessels to food security in Guinea-Bissau by direct landings, as specified in Chapter 5 of the Annex to the Protocol, for the benefit of the local communities and to promote internal fish trade and consumption;
 5. 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 and the Guinea-Bissau 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;

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6. 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 measures to increase the absorption rate of the financial contribution — in order to achieve this objective;

7. Considers that the EU-Guinea Bissau SFPAs will not achieve its objectives if it does not help put in place a management system for the sustainable, long-term exploitation of its fishery resources; considers it of utmost importance to comply with the provisions set out in the Protocol on sectoral support so that it contributes to the full implementation of the national strategy for fisheries and the blue economy; identifies, in this regard, as priority areas for EU support, mobilising the necessary technical and financial assistance in order to:

- a. strengthen institutional capacity, notably regional and global fisheries governance strategies, so as to take account of the cumulative impacts of different fisheries agreements of countries in the region;
- b. support the strengthening of marine protected areas in order to move towards integrated management of fisheries resources;
- c. develop 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, with the aim of attracting landings of the fish caught in the waters of Guinea-Bissau;
- d. strengthen local operator capacity in the fisheries sector by supporting fishermen's organisations;
- e. train fishing professionals;
- f. support small-scale fishing;
- g. contribute to the good ecological condition of the marine environment, in particular by supporting the collection of waste and fishing gear by local actors;
- h. recognise and enhance the role of women and young people in fishing, and improve the organisation of their roles by supporting the requisite conditions to this end;

8. Urges the Commission and the Member States, in their cooperation and official development assistance policies, to take into account the fact that the European Development Fund (EDF) and sectoral support provided for in the EU-Guinea-Bissau SFPAs should complement each other and be fully coordinated, with a view to strengthening the local fisheries sector;

9. Expresses its concern about the growing number of fish meal and fish oil plants on the west African coast, which are also supplied with fish from the waters of Guinea Bissau; underlines the fact that forage fishing runs counter to the principle of sustainability and the provision of valuable protein resources to the local community; welcomes the expansion of the port and landing facilities in Guinea-Bissau, but at the same time expresses its concern that this could be followed by the construction of new fishmeal plants;

10. Calls on the Commission and the Guinea-Bissau authorities to enhance their cooperation in order to 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), so as to overcome the current ban, boost the development of the local fisheries sector and, consequently, make progress towards achieving the SFPAs objectives;

11. Supports the need to enhance the contribution of the SFPAs to the local creation of direct and indirect jobs, either on vessels operating under the SFPAs 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;

12. Recalls the unique nature of Guinea-Bissau's marine and coastal ecosystems, such as the mangrove forests, which act as nursery habitats for fishery resources, and which require targeted action to protect and restore biodiversity;

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13. Considers that information should be compiled on the benefits that the implementation of the Protocol brings to local economies (e.g. employment, infrastructure and social improvements);
 14. 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 fishing zone 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 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, associations of women working in the fisheries sector, trade unions, representatives of coastal communities and Guinea-Bissau civil society organisations;
 15. Considers that there is the absolute need to improve data collection on catches in Guinea Bissau; calls, moreover, for an improvement of the transmission of data generated by the VMS systems of EU vessels via the flag state to the African authorities; calls for better data system interoperability;
 16. Urges the publication of reports on the actions that have been supported by the sectoral support for greater transparency;
 17. Considers that, in the event of the closure of fisheries or the introduction of fishing restrictions, in order to ensure that resources are sustainable, as established in the Protocol, local fishing needs should be addressed first on the basis of sound scientific advice;
 18. Emphasises the importance of the surplus requirement for Union vessels fishing in third country waters;
 19. Supports the need, with a view to improving the sustainability of fishing activities, to improve the governance, control and surveillance of the fishing zone of Guinea Bissau and to combat IUU fishing, inter alia, by stepping up the monitoring of vessels (through the VMS system);
 20. Urges the inclusion of transparency provisions, which would entail publishing all agreements with states or private entities that have granted foreign vessels access to Guinea Bissau's EEZ;
 21. Stresses the importance of allocating the fishing opportunities provided by the SFPA based on the principles of equity, balance and transparency;
 22. Emphasises the importance that the landings of fish in Guinea Bissau ports contribute to local processing activities and food security, both in terms of species and quality;
 23. Calls on the 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, and information on IUU fishing in the Guinean fishing zone, 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 ship-owners (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;
 24. Calls on the Commission and on the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to provide more detailed information on the development of activities associated with forage fishing in the region;
 25. Calls on the Commission to better integrate the recommendations of Parliament into the EU-Guinea-Bissau SFPA and to take them into account in the procedures for the renewal of the Protocol;
 26. 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.
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