



COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS
AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Declaration

The reform of European fisheries policy and its impact on ACP countries

- A. The EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), governing the fisheries policy of EU Member States in Community waters, including the external dimension to this policy, is being reviewed and is expected to be finalised in 2013.
- B. Within the EU Common Fisheries Policy, the Fisheries Partnership Agreements and RFMOs provide the main political framework for ACP–EU fisheries relations. At present, the EU has 21 Fisheries Partnership Agreements, of which 15 are in force.
- C. The coastal eco-systems of tropical countries, such as ACP countries' EEZs, are among the richest in fisheries resources. This wealth of resources is attractive to all distant-water fishing nations, including EU Members States.
- D. The external fleet of the countries of the EU currently consists of more than 700 vessels, and only about half of them are involved in Fisheries Partnership Agreements, the other half operating under private licensing arrangements. Another 400 or so vessels of EU origin operate under joint ventures established in third countries, including ACP countries. Fisheries agreements now cover less than 0.5 % of the activities of EU fleets, and fish caught under FPAs accounts for approximately 3 % of total supplies of fish to the EU market, while imports from ACP countries represent around 10 % of EU fish imports.
- E. It should also be recalled that European markets depend for more than 60% on imports, of which ACP countries represent around 10%, and 68% of ACP countries' fish exports are currently destined for the EU market.
- F. In current fisheries agreements, the proportionality between fishing capacities negotiated and the amount of financial contribution extended to the sector has led ACP governments to grant unsustainable levels of fishing access. It has also led to some ACP countries receiving more funding than they are able to absorb, or not enough funding compared to their needs.
- G. In the past, some ACP groups of countries (in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean or West Africa) have proposed to negotiate fisheries access agreements on a regional basis. The European Commission, however, has traditionally favoured bilateral agreements. In the current proposal this remains the case, although some steps are proposed to establish

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greater consistency between the regional and bilateral approaches of EU external policy, by 'linking together EU bilateral interests in a given region under an integrated regional approach'.

- H. In its communication on the external dimension, the European Commission states that it will 'launch a high-level political initiative to discuss the avenues for capacity reduction on a global level by 2013. Such an initiative would take into account the aspirations of the developing states and be consistent with the CFP reform, which will propose rights-based management as one of the main mechanisms to achieve capacity reduction'.
1. Calls on the EU to ensure that all the components of fisheries relations with developing countries contribute to sustainable fisheries. To this end, the EU should develop sustainable fisheries development partnerships, whose main objective should be to create a favourable environment, in the third developing country concerned, for environmentally, socially and economically sustainable operations;
 2. Calls on the EU to ensure that the future EU regulations on the CFP, on the common organisation of the markets in fisheries and aquaculture products (CMO) or on certain measures regarding countries which authorise non-sustainable fishing with the aim of conserving fish stocks will contribute to the implementation of sustainable fisheries in ACP countries;
 3. Calls on the EU to create a favourable environment for EU private investment in sustainable fisheries operations in ACP countries, which will create decent jobs and high value added in ACP countries, while putting good governance at the heart of future fishing agreements;
 4. Is of the view that, the future CFP external dimension should promote ACP regional integration, by harmonising measures undertaken under Sustainable Fisheries Agreement (SFA), supporting regional scientific and surveillance cooperation, and increasing support for ACP countries effective participation in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMO) and for their fight against illegal, un-reported and un-regulated fishing;
 5. Welcomes the proposal to decouple EU sector support from payments for access rights in ACP waters and to define the sector support in the light of the needs and absorption capacity of partner countries. Urges the EU to support the aid absorption capacity of third countries;
 6. Believes that ACP countries involvement in regional bodies is crucial in order to enable them to exercise their rights and establish or develop access to marine resources, and particularly to highly migratory and straddling stocks, such as tuna and small pelagic resources, for their local fleets as well as fulfil their responsibilities and their commitment to the sustainable exploitation, based on appropriate fisheries development plans and to the enhancement of the contribution of the fisheries sector to food security in ACP countries;

7. Calls for the establishment of a participative and transparent dialogue mechanism with all stakeholders to fulfil the developing countries' priorities for the sustainable development of their fisheries sector;
8. Calls for an evaluation of the economic, social and environmental impacts of all EU policies that affect fisheries development in the third country concerned by the fisheries agreement. Such evaluation should be made publicly available for all stakeholders so as to foster informed participation in policy dialogue in the EU and in the ACP countries concerned;
9. Welcomes the proposal to include a transparency clause in future fishing agreements, to ensure that the cumulated fishing effort by local and all foreign fleets active in a respective EEZ is known; such a clause, together with improved data collection and research, will help in the evaluation of the level of surplus stock available: considers that there is a need for greater transparency in the operation of SFAs with regard to the publication of ex ante and ex post evaluations, which contain important data such as, for example, the value of the catches made by EU fleets in ACP waters;
10. Insists that EU-flagged and EU-owned vessels, fishing in ACP countries waters, should be governed by an agreement stipulating the conditions under which EU operators can undertake fishing activities in the third countries concerned particularly:
 - captures by European fleets in ACP waters should be based on the existence of a surplus;
 - the EU should ensure that EU vessels only use appropriate fishing practices, methods and *gear* consistent with the nature and size of the fisheries resources to be exploited;
 - the EU should ensure that there are landings of at least part of the catches in ACP countries so as to promote the development of local processing industries;
11. Calls on the EU to guarantee full transparency on the implementation of sustainable fisheries agreements with partner countries, including as regards negotiating fishing access, managing fishing activities and evaluating negotiation outcomes;
12. Also calls for full transparency on the part of ACP-EU countries with regard to fisheries management in their waters in the framework of agreements that they conclude with partner countries; this requires concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders to ensure that key information is shared *publicly*, particularly with regard to local civil society and that members of Parliament have the capacity and means to use this information and hold their governments accountable for decisions and service delivery;
13. Considers that, in the context of the CMO reform, compliance of ACP imports with future EU standards related to sustainable fishing, environmental protection, labour standards and respect for human rights should help to promote sustainable fisheries in

ACP countries, and should not be used for protectionist purposes or to tilt the playing field in favour of EU vessel operators;

14. Insists that European investment in ACP fisheries should be based on the developmental needs of ACP countries: job creation, food security, export revenue, etc. The ACP small and medium-sized fishing enterprises (SMEs), particularly small-scale fisheries, processing and exporting businesses, are effectively addressing many of these needs explicitly, and a priority for EU investments should therefore be to support SME development in the fisheries sector;
15. Highlights that the FPAs with ACP countries must, in the medium term, encourage third countries to sustainably exploit their own resources, both for internal consumption and for export; so that the created wealth remains in these countries for their own benefit;
16. Advocates that the fisheries agreements between EU and third countries must be preceded by an open debate that allows the public and social organisations of the various countries to participate effectively and involves the National Parliaments and the European Parliament, ensuring that the negotiations are democratic and transparent in the framework of the operation of the institutions of each country;
17. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this declaration to the ACP-EU Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament.