



CFFA

Coalition for Fair
Fisheries Arrangements



7 June 2013

for the attention of Maria Damanaki
European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs

Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and Mauritania

Dear Commissioner

We, Mauritanian and European civil society organisations, wish to inform you of our position on and our concern over the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) between the European Union and Mauritania, following the negative vote in the European Parliament fisheries committee on 29 May 2013.

Firstly, however, we wish to congratulate the members of the European Commission negotiating team who, like their Mauritanian counterparts, spared no effort from the start of negotiation of this protocol to put in place a partnership built on sustainable fishing. The approach taken by the European institutions on the external dimension of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) vindicates the objectives sought by both sides in these negotiations.

The protocol negotiated is an expression of the direction taken in the reform:

- The principle of access to the surplus is respected, in particular for octopus, which is a strategic resource for Mauritanian small-scale fishermen;
- The new zoning, which pushes the shrimp and pelagic trawlers further out to sea, provides better protection for the resources that are considered to be overfished (such as the round sardinella) and restricts as far as possible interaction between industrial and small-scale fishing;
- The obligation to land catches locally will boost on-shore activities and help create jobs, which also enhances social cohesion and the development dynamic.

The findings of the Scientific Committee which met in April and the technical meeting in May serve only to confirm the line taken on access, with regard to octopus and the new zoning arrangements for shrimpers and small pelagic vessels.

We note today that, after a number of months of provisional application, several dozen European vessels have consciously committed to the sustainable fishing approach, taking account of local development and good governance needs.

Against this backdrop, the vote in the European Parliament fisheries committee reflects, in our view, a short-term strategy, influenced by interests which are unwilling to embrace this dynamic of sustainable and fair fishing.

We are convinced that rejection of this protocol in plenary session would have a detrimental effect on all those working for a sustainable and fair fisheries policy outside Community waters, as adopted last week within the basic regulation for the reformed CFP.

Among other things, it can be expected that rejection of this agreement would sow doubt among most of the European Union's partners in West Africa as to the real political will to implement the reformed CFP. This without any doubt would have an impact on forging, or confirming, partnerships



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with the countries of the region. Similarly, it would demonstrate to the rest of the world that the EU has fallen at the first hurdle on implementing its brand new policy in terms of progress to be made to ensure that there is sustainable and fair fishing outside European waters.

If the protocol were to be rejected, the non-discrimination clause which it contains and which requires that all foreign fleets comply with the same sustainability requirements as those set by the protocol, would no longer apply. European fleets would soon be replaced by other foreign fleets already active in the region, some of which are not bound by the same rules as the European fleet.

Lastly, if this protocol is voted down by the European Parliament, European operators who currently fish in Mauritanian waters will have to leave without notice, just as happened with Morocco. It seems to us unfair that operators who are working within the sustainable fishery conditions contained in the protocol will be penalised in this way, while fleets which refuse to go and fish will receive preferential treatment, particularly in terms of subsidies. Indeed, we are surprised at the preferential treatment reserved for the shrimp fleet which enjoys subsidies for “temporary cessation of activity” although other fishing opportunities have been negotiated – and paid for – for this fleet which is refusing to go out and fish.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate our support for the approach that you, Commissioner, and the European Commission have hitherto taken, an approach which seeks to turn the political commitments made in the reform of the CFP into reality. We urge you to do all in your power to ensure that the Union does not fail this first test by ignoring the principles of the reformed CFP and other EU policies which seek to promote the development of sustainable fishing.

Yours faithfully,

Signatory organisations and contact details:

Sid’Ahmed Abeid, President of the small-scale fisheries section of the Fédération Nationale des Pêches de Mauritanie (FNP)

abeid1957@hotmail.fr

Ahmed Mahmoud Cherif, Director of the NGO Pour une Pêche écologique génératrice de progrès social (Pêhecops)

mahmoud.cherif46@gmail.com

Ahmed Senhoury, Director of the Regional Marine and Coastal Conservation Programme for West Africa (PRCM)

Ahmed.Senhoury@iucn.org

Jedna Deida, President of the West African Journalists Network for Responsible Fisheries (REJOPRAO)

Jednadeida@yahoo.com

Gaoussou Gueye, General Secretary of the African Confederation of Small-scale Fisheries Professional Organisations (CAOPA)

gaoussoug@gmail.com

Beatrice Gorez, Coordinator of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA)

cffa.cape@scarlet.be

Roberto Ferrigno, Common Fisheries Policy Project Coordinator, WWF

rferrigno@wwf.eu