



EP(17)37

Brussels, 18th May 2017

Europêche applauds the new fisheries agreement between the EU and Mauritius although requests a consistent approach in the Indian Ocean

- For immediate release -

On 26th April, the European Union and the Republic of Mauritius signed a new Protocol to implement the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement in place, setting the legal conditions to allow EU tuna fishing vessels to fish in Mauritius waters for the next 4 years. While the EU fishing sector broadly welcomes this agreement, it regrets the missed opportunity to strengthen sustainable fisheries and ocean governance in the Indian Ocean by linking this and other fisheries agreements to regional management policies and negotiations.

Europêche, the representative body of fishermen and fishing vessel owners in Europe, applauds the excellent outcome of the negotiations concerning the new Mauritius Protocol and expresses its support to DG MARE negotiating team, whose agreements have proven positive and profitable for both the EU and third countries. The fishing body strongly believes that European sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) are the most transparent and mutually beneficial fisheries agreements in the world. For this purpose, the fishing sector demands additional human and financial resources for this unit, to allow them to negotiate more and better SFPAs with other relevant countries.

The tuna organisations that Europêche represents, namely OPAGAC, ANABAC and ORTHONGEL, welcome these positive results, which are important not only to strengthen the tuna network fisheries agreements in the Indian Ocean but also to consolidate strategic access to fish resources. The EU fishing industry will utilise as much as possible the fishing opportunities provided by this new agreement.

However, the fishing body argues that the renewal of the Protocol with Mauritius should have paved the way for better collaboration with this country to achieve better results within the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) governing these waters called the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). This would have allowed for a better exchange of best practices and the development of regional policies to contribute to the fight against IUU fishing and better governance in the Indian Ocean.

Javier Garat, President of Europêche, declared: *“We have requested in numerous occasions the need to work towards an alliance with IOTC countries, notably Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar. We were disappointed to observe that during the negotiations with Mauritius, no questions were raised regarding IOTC negotiations. Regional management should be fundamentally linked to fisheries agreements’ talks, and we believe that in the case of Mauritius, it is particularly important to achieve a closer cooperation and understanding.”*

Garat continued: "Otherwise, the proposal tabled by Mauritius for the next IOTC session, extremely limiting the number of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) and supply vessels, should have never been presented. These measures are not founded on any scientific recommendation of the IOTC Scientific Committee, and has no basis to further tighten management measures that we already found hard to accept last year, with no time to evaluate its effects on the yellowfin stock. This will certainly hamper the fishing activities of the EU vessels operating in the area and therefore will bring the positions of both parties into conflict for the upcoming IOTC negotiations."

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Europêche represents the fisheries sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 14 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 10 EU Member States: DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, LV, PL, UK.

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