

Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 2 April 2025 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Implementing Protocol (2024-2029) to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

- 1. Rapporteur:** Éric SARGIACOMO (FR / S&D)
- 2. References:** 2024/0159M(NLE) / A10-0040/2025 / P10_TA (2025)0054
- 3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 2 April 2025
- 4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Fisheries (PECH)

Opinion giving Committee: Committee on Development (DEVE)

- 5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution assesses the Protocol on the implementation of the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) between the European Community and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (2024-2029), signed on and applied provisionally since 18 September 2024. The resolution emphasises the importance of the EU-Guinea-Bissau FPA for both Guinea-Bissau and the European Union, recognising its economic value and its status as a multi-species agreement. The resolution also highlights the importance of a structured framework for cooperation on fisheries aspects with Guinea-Bissau to achieve the objectives of a sustainable fisheries partnership, and the EU's wider objectives on international ocean governance, strengthening cooperation under regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), and fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

In terms of specific requests, the resolution calls for an enhancement of the EU-Guinea-Bissau FPA by fostering sustainable fisheries exploitation without compromising local food security. The resolution also asks that transparency and accountability are prioritised and ensured in the implementation of the FPA. It calls for stricter monitoring of fishing practices, especially concerning IUU fishing, and stresses the need to involve local communities in decision-making processes related to the EU-Guinea-Bissau FPA. The resolution advocates for a strengthened and more effective use of sectoral support, including better coordination with EU cooperation instruments. It recognises the importance of the inclusion of stronger social protection, including fair remuneration and safety standards aligned with ILO and IMO conventions, and calls for continued reinforcement of the social dimension. It also calls for regular reporting, better transparency, and the incorporation of its recommendations in future protocols.

- 6. Response to requests and overview of action taken, or**

intended to be taken, by the Commission:

The Commission welcomes Parliament's Resolution and agrees with most of its findings.

Regarding paragraphs 4 and 26, on the export of fisheries products to the EU market, Guinea-Bissau has not yet obtained its certification for exporting fisheries products into the EU. This is a strategic objective for Guinea-Bissau, which the EU recognises and supports, as a channel to strengthen and diversify its national economy. The Commission and the EU Delegation in Guinea-Bissau continue to work closely with Guinea-Bissau's competent authorities on this process. Through the EU-Guinea-Bissau FPA, the Commission has supported Guinea-Bissau's efforts to reach this objective through the sectoral support funds of the 2019-2024 Protocol.

The EU also supports the development of a sustainable fisheries sector in Guinea-Bissau through a broader set of cooperation actions. These include targeted technical assistance under the *Advisory Services for Resilient Agri-Food Systems* facility, which is currently providing advisory services and capacity building to the competent fisheries authority and private operators for compliance with EU hygiene and sanitary requirements. Complementary support has also been provided through the *Better Training for Safer Food* initiative, which has delivered high-quality training to Bissau-Guinean officials on EU sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

The EU aims to strengthen the agribusiness and fisheries value chains and increasing the added value of domestic products in order to develop opportunities for economic growth and create decent jobs. Regarding paragraphs 8 and 41, on the monitoring of fleet activities in Guinea-Bissau's waters and the implementation of the transparency clause, according to the 2024-2029 Protocol, both Parties undertake to publish and exchange information on any agreement allowing foreign vessels to enter Guinea-Bissau's fishing zone and on the resulting fishing effort. The Commission will continue to work closely with the competent authorities of Guinea-Bissau to encourage utmost transparency on the activities of national and foreign fleets in its waters, including the publication of relevant information by Guinea-Bissau.

Regarding paragraph 9, on the strengthening of the implementation of the IUU Regulation, the Commission is actively working with the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to ensure that the registration policy is in line with the available control capacities. In the framework of its dialogue with the authorities of Guinea-Bissau, the Commission has also emphasised the importance for Guinea-Bissau to comply with its international responsibilities as a flag State.

Regarding paragraph 17, on the participation of local communities in the implementation of the new Protocol, the Commission will continue to promote the strengthening of consultation and participation of coastal and artisanal fishing communities, including women's associations, in the implementation of the Protocol. For example, the Commission has

encouraged Guinea-Bissau to repeat the successful organisation of the 2023 National Conference on Fisheries – funded by EU sectoral support – and to regularly consult relevant stakeholders in the negotiation and implementation of the EU-Guinea-Bissau FPA.

Regarding paragraph 18, on the implementation of the electronic reporting system (ERS) in Guinea-Bissau, the Commission will continue to stress to Guinea-Bissau that gathering the necessary legal and technical conditions for the implementation of ERS is an absolute priority for the EU. This implementation is key for the sustainable management of fisheries in Guinea-Bissau and should be concluded without further delay. The Commission has indicated to Guinea-Bissau that this activity should be considered a priority for the sectoral support funds under the 2024-2029 Protocol.

Regarding paragraphs 19 and 22, on the strengthening and improved coordination on the sectoral support component, the 2024-2029 Protocol includes strengthened conditions for the implementation of sectoral support funds. This includes provisions on the monitoring of sectoral support, and checks and controls on the use of funds by the European Court of Auditors and the European Anti-Fraud Office.

In addition to these strengthened provisions, the Commission agrees that the complementarity and coordination between different EU funds is a priority and necessary to achieve the EU and Guinea-Bissau's shared strategic objectives, including the sustainable development of the fisheries sector and coastal communities of Guinea-Bissau. Additional efforts, including through the important work of the EU Delegation in Guinea-Bissau, have been deployed to ensure complementarity with cooperation projects and funds by other international partners.

The Commission has continued to work very closely with the competent authorities of Guinea-Bissau to achieve a more effective and efficient absorption of sectoral support funds, and to focus on strategic activities that will contribute to a reinforced and sustainable building of capacity in Guinea-Bissau, including in areas related to fisheries management, scientific research, monitoring and control, the fight against IUU fishing, infrastructure in the fisheries sector, climate change, among others.

Regarding paragraph 31, on the functioning of the Joint Committee and the Joint Scientific Committee, the Commission will continue to ensure that these committees operate effectively and consider adequately the input of stakeholders.

Regarding paragraphs 43 to 47, on the importance of the effective implementation of the social clause and its amendment, the EU promotes decent work in the fisheries sector, in line with the objectives of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The EU promotes the ratification and effective implementation of ILO Convention C188 on work in fishing, and other international standards, in particular the IMO Convention on Training Standards for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F).

In 2021, the Commission began in-depth work aimed at strengthening the social clause provided for in the implementing protocols of (Sustainable) Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs). After many months of discussions with social partners, Member States and other relevant stakeholders, the Commission drafted a model clause to be included in all future SFPAs. Following discussions with Member States in the Council at the time of the adoption of the Cabo Verde protocol, the clause was slightly amended to address certain technical questions. For Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau, to avoid delaying the signature of the protocols, it was decided that this clause would be modified as soon as possible after their conclusion.

On the implementation of the social clause, this point is always discussed at the Joint Committee and any non-compliance or challenge may be raised for analysis by the parties, including for the adoption of corrective measures. For example, the Commission stressed at the last Joint Committee the importance of ensuring a regular training mechanism for fishers in Guinea-Bissau to promote better occupational safety standards, according to international standards. This was well received and both parties have agreed to making this a priority for sectoral support funds under the 2024-2029 Protocol. Furthermore, when carrying out the mandatory ex-post and ex-ante evaluation of implementing protocols, the Commission also assesses the implementation of the social clause.

Regarding paragraph 48, on the evaluation of implementing protocols ahead of negotiations, the Commission arranges for ex-post and ex-ante evaluation studies for all (S)FPAs and their implementing protocols. In addition, the Commission conducts its own ex-post and ex-ante evaluation in the form of a Staff Working Document. Both types of documents are comprehensive in their analysis and accessible to the public on the Commission's website.

Regarding paragraph 49, on calls for more detailed information on forage fishing activities, this is well noted by the Commission, and the Commission will endeavour to seek and provide more information as soon as it becomes available.

Regarding paragraph 50, on the calls for better incorporation of the European Parliament's recommendations, this is well noted by the Commission.