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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION**

**Accompanying the document**

**Recommendation for a Council decision to authorise the Commission to open negotiations on behalf of the European Union for the renewal of the Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco**

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The sustainable fisheries partnership agreements concluded between the European Union and third countries are based on the principles of sustainability, transparency and non-discrimination, and contribute to the establishment of a governance framework for external fisheries. The Commission is required to carry out an ex-post and ex-ante evaluation before any negotiations on a new protocol; this is a routine step in the negotiation process. This document sets out the results of the evaluation<sup>1</sup> of the current protocol between the EU and Morocco, which expires on 14 June 2018<sup>2</sup>.

The protocol offers access to the Moroccan fishing zone for 126 EU vessels operating in six fishing categories and targeting pelagic and demersal species in exchange for an annual contribution from the EU of EUR 30 000 000, of which EUR 16 000 000 in return for access and EUR 14 000 000 to support the national fishing industry. The beneficiary shipowners, from 11 Member States, pay fees of around EUR 10 000 000 a year.

The Commission is satisfied with the evaluation, which examines five well-defined criteria; the results are reliable and the recommendations are relevant. The analysis presented in the SWD shows that the agreement is very important for the EU, its fleet and Morocco.

The protocol is effective in allowing access to a large fishing zone for both traditional, small-scale undertakings and industrial fleets from the EU. It ensures the sustainability of the fisheries and helps maintain the profitability of ships operating in Morocco. It contributes to sustainable development in the Moroccan fishing industry and supports the implementation of the Haliotis strategy. The protocol offers added value and is efficient for both parties – it offers a good return on investment for the EU and its efficiency for Morocco is comparable to that of other multi-species agreements. The protocol is relevant, in that its objectives correspond to the needs identified. It complements the network of EU agreements in the Atlantic and gives shipowners fishing opportunities suited to their needs. For Morocco, it provides access to resources of which full use is not made locally, and promotes economic interaction. Finally, the protocol is consistent with and complements other EU initiatives.

The evaluation makes various recommendations to be taken into consideration by the Commission in the negotiations on a future protocol, including maintaining most of the conditions in the current protocol. The Commission agrees with the conclusions of the evaluation and considers renewal of the Protocol to be the best option. The recommendations are considered relevant for such a renewal. However, the Commission considers that some technical provisions should be reviewed. Finally, it considers it appropriate to include blue growth in the sectoral support, which would be relevant in the context of a regional and proximity policy in which Morocco plays an important role.

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<sup>1</sup> Ex-post and ex-ante evaluation of the protocol to the sustainable fisheries partnership agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco. Final report, September 2017 (F&S, Poseidon and Megapesca).

<sup>2</sup> Council Decision 2013/720/EU of 15 November 2013 on the signing and provisional application of the protocol (OJ L 328, 7.12.2013, p. 1) and the text of the protocol (OJ L 328, 7.12.2013, p. 2); Council Decision 2013/785/EU of 16 December 2013 on the conclusion (OJ L 349, 21.12.2013, p. 1).