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# Renewal of Fisheries Protocol between EU and Guinea Bissau

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**IP/01/768**

Brussels, 31 May 2001

## Renewal of Fisheries Protocol between EU and Guinea Bissau

***The European Commission and Guinea Bissau have initialled a Protocol to the Fisheries Agreement for a period of five years from 16 June 2001. The financial compensation will amount to a total of €1 million. Following a meeting with the Finance Minister, Mr Rui Duarte Barros, who led the Delegation from Guinea Bissau, Mr Franz Fischler, Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, expressed his satisfaction at the outcome of the negotiations. "This is good news, not only for the European fishermen, but also for the fisheries sector of Guinea Bissau. We have struck a fair***

***balance of mutual benefit. As well as allowing our fishermen to continue their activities in the waters of Guinea Bissau, the new Protocol will strengthen sustainable fisheries and support the fishing sector of Guinea Bissau with targeted measures for the local artisanal sector, scientific and technical programmes and training", Mr Fischler said.***

The Agreement with Guinea Bissau is one of the oldest and most important for the EU. Vessels operating under this Agreement come from Spain, France, Italy and Portugal. Vessels from Greece are also likely to operate under the new Protocol.

According to the new Protocol, the two parties have expressed their commitment to ensuring sustainable fisheries in the waters of Guinea Bissau on a non-discriminatory manner between the various fleets involved. It has also been agreed to hold a joint annual scientific meeting to follow the evolution of fish resources in these waters. The two parties have agreed to consult, should it be felt necessary, on the basis of the best available scientific advice, to take measures to ensure sustainable management of fish resources. Where these measures relate to a reduction of the fishing possibilities allocated to EU vessels under the Protocol, the amount of financial compensation will be reviewed accordingly.

A provision regarding the maximum level of by-catches permitted for shrimp vessels has been introduced limiting the level of cephalopods and fish allowed on board at 50% of the catches of these vessels.

Under the new Protocol, the level of fishing possibilities remains the same for shrimp vessels at 9,600 GRT (Gross Registered Tonnes) per year. There will be a small decrease of 200 GRT per year for vessels catching fish and cephalopods from 3,000 to 2,800 GRT. The number of tuna seiners will go up from 37 to 40, while that of tuna pole-line vessels and long-liners will go down from 52 to 36.

The financial compensation will amount to €1 million over the 5 years. During the first three years the compensation paid to Guinea Bissau will represent some €0 million, with €1 million to be allocated to specific measures including support to the local artisanal sector, to scientific and technical programmes and training. For the two remaining years, the compensation will go up to €0.5 million.

The financial contribution paid by vessel owners operating under this Agreement, which was increased by 5% on 1 January 2000, will remain the same for the first three years of the new Protocol before being increased by 5% thereafter. There will be also be an increase from €0 to €5 per tonne of tuna caught.

The implementation of the current Protocol was characterised by the suspension of fishing activities between June 1998 and April 1999 due to the outbreak of an armed conflict in Guinea Bissau that did not allow for the safe carrying out of fishing activities by EU vessels. The EU withheld the financial compensation corresponding to this

period which represented some €5 million. When peace returned the EU decided to allocate this amount to Guinea Bissau for the restoration of facilities supporting the fishing sector in this country.