



SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR MARITIME FISHERIES

EP(14)27

9/4/2014

Press Release

EU/FISHERIES: European Social Partners adopt a social clause to be inserted in the Sustainable Fisheries Agreements (SFAs) with third countries

At one of their recent meetings the workers' organisation ETF¹ and the employers' representatives of Europêche² and Cogeca³ have formally adopted a revised social clause to be included in SFAs with third countries, which refers to labour and standards of social protection and aims at ensuring decent working conditions for non-EU fishermen working on-board vessels operating through the SFAs.

Through the enforcement of the principles contained in the clause, EU social partners want to ensure that principles like the right to collective bargaining, the application of decent working and living conditions, and freedom of association are enforced on EU vessels.

The existing fishing agreements already include a social clause which was negotiated by the social partners in 2001. *"By revising the text of the clause, social partners want to make it more precise and workable and to link it to the available international instruments, notably to the ILO work in fishing Convention 188, on which ETF, Europêche and COGECA have recently concluded an agreement that should become EU law",* said **Michel Claes**, Chair of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries (SSDCSF).

"We are asking the Commission to first make a legal assessment of the text that we have negotiated and then to include the new clause where possible on basis of the Union's competences in the SFAs to be signed in the future. For most of the provisions included in the clause, it will be up to the Member States, in their capacity of flag states, to ensure that existing laws and standards are properly applied on-board of the vessels operating through the SFAs" added **Ment van der Zwan**, vice-Chair of the SSDCSF.

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¹ The ETF represents more than 2.5 million transport workers from 243 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.

² Europêche represents the catching sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 16 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 10 EU Member States: BE, DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, PL and UK.

³ Cogeca is the united voice of agricultural cooperatives in the EU. It also represents the interests of fisheries cooperatives in Europe through its FISH Working Party which it shares with Copa. Currently, the fisheries representatives come from the following 5 countries: DE, IE, IT, MT, SI.