

# FISHERIES PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS UNDER THE EUROPEAN COMMON FISHERIES POLICY: AN EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The last decade can be characterised by an increased focus on the external dimension of sustainable development of the various European Union (EU) policies. One of the main objectives of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) is to “actively promote sustainable development worldwide and ensure that the EU internal and external policies are consistent with global sustainable development and its international commitments”.<sup>[1]</sup> These sustainable development standards require that EU policies should aim at tackling several key unsustainable trends as well as that they should ensure the mutual reinforcement of the EU’s economic, social and environmental policies. The requirement of higher standards to regulate the impact of the EU policies also affects the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

Since its establishment, the CFP has been subject to change. Being part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EU’s fisheries policy started in a rather subsidiary position. It, however, developed towards a fisheries policy that gradually identified the need for sustainable development with regard to the fisheries *within* and *outside* community waters. Although continuation of European fisheries remains the core objective of the CFP, the Commission’s 2002 Green Paper turned out to be a point of transition because of its explicit acknowledgement that the past achievements of the CFP had not resulted in a sustainable exploitation of marine living resources. In line with the SDS, the EU has increasingly emphasised the external dimension of sustainable development. This resulted in sharpened objectives to ensure that its external policies — including the bilateral fisheries agreements — need to be in line with the global goal of sustainable development.

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[1] Council of the European Union, Brussels, 26 June 2006 (10917/06), *Renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy* as adopted by the European Council on 15/16 June 2006, 4.