The present working document from DG MARE aims at providing an assessment by the European Commission of the ex-post and ex-ante evaluation of the Protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, in particular the findings and conclusions included in this evaluation report.

The descriptive part of the report provides an environmental, economic and political overview of the country, a presentation of its fishery resources and their current exploitation by local and foreign fleets, as well as data on fish processing, export and trade figures.

The descriptive part is completed by an ex-post assessment chapter on the implementation of the current Protocol (supported by an economic and financial analysis of its effects) and a prospective chapter on the appropriateness and possible options for the renewal of the existing Protocol, based on an analysis of the needs and wishes of both potential partners as well as on the state of the relevant stocks.

The main conclusion of the report is that it would be in the interest of both Mauritania and the European Union (EU) to conclude a new fisheries agreement. In particular, the report stresses that the renewal of the Protocol would be feasible and relevant provided that the contribution of the EU is better suited than the current protocol and that the fishing categories for which there is a strong probability of activity are clearly identified.

The evaluation report gives some valuable recommendations on the orientations the EU could follow with regard to a future new Protocol with Mauritania. In particular, it includes suggestions on possible improvements of technical provisions of the Annex to the Protocol for which difficulties of implementation have been faced.

However, the report needs to be considered in the light of the many constraints that emerged during its production. Two main limits can be pointed out for this specific evaluation exercise:

1) the time constraints to get a new evaluation. Indeed, in order to avoid the interruption of fishing activities in 2015, the negotiations for a new Protocol should start early in 2014, taking into account the necessary internal processes for the signature, provisional application and conclusion of this protocol. The opening of the negotiations requires the Commission to obtain a mandate from the Council, conditional upon the delivery of the evaluation report. Therefore, deadlines to deliver such report were extremely tight (a maximum of 3 months).

2) the short time period subject to assessment: the evaluation only covers 11 months, from the start of fishing activities under the current Protocol on January 2013 to the date of finalization of the evaluation (November 2013).

The present document shall be enclosed to any transmission of the evaluation report.
These two factors constitute important limitations to the findings of the evaluation: in particular, the short time coverage made it sometimes difficult to get sufficient feedbacks or relevant datas on the concrete implementation of the Protocol’s provisions.

Therefore, even if its conclusions somehow appear valid and consistent with the existing knowledge, they are to be taken as provisional and will need to be confirmed by the second year of implementation of the Protocol (2014).

Regarding the analysis of the economic and financial aspects of the current Protocol (chapter 6 of the evaluation report), it is important to stress that such analysis is deeply dependant on sets of fish prices used. As for the previous ex-post evaluations, contractors faced strong difficulties to collect relevant and reliable information on economic and financial data and some uncertainties remain, particularly on the level of first marketing prices. This explains that the contractors have supported their assessment by selecting an arbitrary average first marketing price associated to range of the most likely prices, allowing them to run a sensitivity analysis. The cost-effectiveness of the current protocol has therefore to be considered cautiously, taking into account all assumptions and limits associated to this exercise.