The present working document aims at providing an assessment by the European Commission of the ex-ante evaluation of a possible future Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA) and Protocol with the Republic of Liberia, in particular the findings and conclusions included in the evaluation report.

The descriptive part of the report provides an overview of the environmental, economic and political situation in Liberia, as well as a presentation of its fisheries governance and 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 a prospective chapter on the appropriateness and possible options for the conclusion of an FPA, based on an analysis of the needs and wishes of both potential partners as well as on the state of the relevant stocks. The report also gives some recommendations on the orientations the EU could follow with regard to the implementation of such an FPA, based on lessons learned from FPAs with other countries in the region. The main conclusion of the report is that it would be in the interest of both Liberia and the European Union (EU) to conclude an FPA and protocol.

However, the findings, conclusions and recommendations formulated in the evaluation report need to be considered in the light of the following constraints and limitations:

1) The authorities of Liberia were not consulted for the purpose of the evaluation. The evaluation is based on the knowledge and analyses of its authors, reviews of relevant literature and consultations with relevant organisations in West Africa and within the EU (European Commission, European External Action Service and selected Member State administrations) as well as the private sector. As a result, the chapter detailing Liberia's needs to be met - in particular in relation to sectoral support - is largely based on assumptions which will need to be confirmed by the Liberian authorities in the context of possible future negotiations.

2) The importance of fisheries activities in Liberian waters is very likely to be understated due to shortcomings in data collection and lack of reliable data in particular regarding the tuna fishery. This may be compounded by the fact fishing zones coordinates are sometimes used for catch reporting which are different from the official EEZ coordinates of the relevant coastal states. The lack of reliable data is likely to have an impact on the assessment of fishing opportunities under any future partnership agreement.

These two factors constitute important limitations which are acknowledged in the report and need to be taken into account when using the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. In particular, the evaluation will need to be completed and confirmed by contacts and consultations with the Liberian authorities.

The present document shall accompany any transmission of the evaluation report