



**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOOD,  
AGRICULTURE AND COCOA AFFAIRS**

**ON THE**

**RATIFICATION OF THE REGIONAL  
CONVENTION ON FISHERIES COOPERATION  
AMONG AFRICAN STATES BORDERING THE  
ATLANTIC OCEAN (ATLAFCO)**

**JULY, 2014**



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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Regional Convention on Fisheries Cooperation among African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean was laid in Parliament on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2014 and referred to the Committee on Food, Agriculture and Cocoa Affairs for consideration and report to the House in accordance with Article 75 of the 1992 Constitution and Order 176 of the Standing Orders of Parliament.

**2.0 DELIBERATIONS**

2.0 The Committee met on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2014 with officials of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Fisheries Commission and considered the Convention. In attendance at the meeting were the Hon. Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Hon. Nayon Bilijo, the Chief Director of the Ministry, Mrs Rebecca Amorh Aboagye and other officials from the Ministry and the Fisheries Commission. The Committee is grateful to the Minister and his officials for their inputs and clarifications.

**3.0 REFERENCE MATERIALS**

3.1 The Committee was guided by the following documents:

- I. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana;
- II. The Standing Orders of Parliament;

**4.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

4.1 The Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (abbreviated as ATLAFCO in English and COMHAFAT in French), was created in 1989, as a Regional Fisheries body, following the Rabat Declaration adopted at the end of its meeting held in

the Kingdom of Morocco from 30<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1989. The headquarters of the Conference Secretariat is located in Rabat, Morocco.

- 4.2 The objectives of ATLAFCO are to promote and strengthen regional cooperation on fisheries development and to coordinate and harmonize efforts and capacities for the conservation and exploitation of fisheries resources in the fisheries zones of African countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean.
- 4.3 The current membership of ATLAFCO is twenty two (22) out of which fourteen (14) have ratified the convention and the remaining eight (8) including Ghana are yet to ratify.

## **5.0 RATIONALE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ATLAFCO**

- 5.1 The establishment of ATLAFCO as a Regional Fisheries body is in consonance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982 which encourages the execution of regional and sub-regional agreements on fisheries cooperation.
- 5.2 Member states also took cognisance of the peculiar nature of the marine environment which requires shared management responsibility for sustainable fisheries development.
- 5.3 In the light of the above, member states decided to develop and adopt the Regional Convention on Fisheries Cooperation among African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean (ATLAFCO Convention) as a common agreement for promoting collaboration among sub-regional, regional and international fishery organisations with the ultimate aim of improving the socio-economic wellbeing of member states.

## **6.0 OBSERVATIONS**

- 6.1 The Committee was informed that Ghana has actively participated in the activities of ATLAFCO since its establishment in 1989 including holding the positions of Vice President and President of the Organisation even though Ghana was yet to ratify the Convention. The Minister indicated that the delay in ratifying the Convention was an oversight.

- 6.2 According to the Minister, it was the responsibility of the Secretariat of the Organisation to notify Member States to ratify the Convention and have it deposited at the Registry. Unfortunately, the Organisation had teething challenges at the initial stages and this affected its records management system. According to the Minister, Ghana was only notified this year (2014) that she was yet to ratify the Convention after the country had held several positions within the Organisation. Ghana currently holds the position of President of the Organisation and hence the urgent need to ratify the Convention.
- 6.3 It was noted that Ghana played an influential role during her tenure as head of the Organisation. For instance, under the Presidency of Ghana, ATLAFCO signed a cooperation Agreement with Long Distance Regional Advisory Council (LDRAC) of the European Union (EU). The LDRAC is responsible for advising Institutions of the EU (the EU Parliament, the EU Commission, EU Member States, etc), on issues regarding the management and conservation of fisheries resources to contribute to the implementation of the principles of the Common Fisheries Policy outside European Community waters and to improve the external relations of the EU in fisheries matters.
- 6.4 In addition, through Ghana's influence at the helm of the Organisation, ATLAFCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Federal Agency for Fisheries (Russian Federation) in November 2013, to strengthen cooperation between the two bodies.
- 6.5 The Committee was also informed that under the leadership of Ghana, ATLAFCO worked and resolved a long-standing disagreement between Fisheries Researchers and Managers by creating a Standing Working Group for a continuous dialogue between the two bodies.
- 6.6 It was observed that the objectives and purpose of the Convention was in consonance with Ghana's national interest in terms of regional co-operation to manage shared stocks and to combat illegal fishing in the West African Region.

6.7 The Committee was also informed that Ghana had on several occasions used the ATLAFCO platform to solicit the support of the 22 member states of the organisation to advance Ghana's position on issues at international fora such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and International Whaling Commission (IWC).

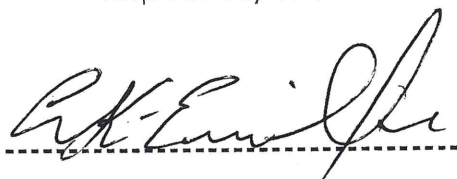
6.8 Other benefits due Ghana upon acceding to the Convention include the use of the International Fish Trade Fair organized by ATLAFCO annually to promote her fishery products in addition to training and other capacity building benefits for Ghanaian fisheries officials.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

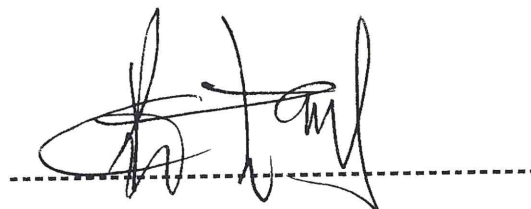
7.1 The Committee has thoroughly examined the Convention and is of the view that accession to the Convention by Ghana will be beneficial to the nation's interests. Acceding to the Convention will enable Ghana use the Organisation to canvass issues of Ghana's national interest.

7.2 The Committee accordingly recommends to the House to ratify the Regional Convention on Fisheries Cooperation among African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean.

Respectfully submitted.



**HON. GABRIEL K. ESSILFIE**  
**CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE**



**CAMILLO PWMANAG (MR.)**  
**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

July, 2014