(English version)

Question for written answer E-001612/25
to the Commission
Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE)
(23 April 2025)

Subject: Negotiations on the abolition of tariffs on imports of fisheries products from the Maldives

Negotiations between the EU and the Maldives on the possible abolition of tariffs on imports of fisheries products have been ongoing for seven years, with no resolution in sight. Last year, the Maldives ratified the Samoa Agreement, taking a further step towards closer cooperation with the EU and joining the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). After years of negotiations, it is crucial that significant progress is made on this issue.

1. What is the current state of play of negotiations between the EU and the Maldives?

2. What are the obstacles currently preventing the conclusion of a mutual agreement?

3. Within what timeframe does the Commission envisage the possible resolution of the outstanding issues?

Submitted: 23.4.2025

Answer given by Mr Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(19 June 2025)

The Maldives expressed interest in joining an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) during the third EU-Maldives Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) in 2022.

The Maldives' objective in joining an EPA is to benefit from duty-free, quota-free access to the EU market, especially for their main export product (tuna), which they lost after their graduation from the Generalised System of Preferences in 2015.

At the fourth EU-Maldives SOM in 2023, the Maldives stressed their interest in joining the Samoa Agreement. This agreement provides a legal framework for EU relations with countries of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, including a possibility of concluding with them economic partnership agreements. On 1 July 2024, the Maldives signed the Samoa Agreement.

In subsequent meetings with representatives of the government of the Maldives the Commission provided a non-paper outlining the steps required to join the EPA between the EU and the five Eastern and Southern African (ESA5) countries, the most relevant one given the Maldives' geographical position.

To proceed, the Maldives need to (i) sign the Samoa Agreement (completed in 2024); (ii) join the ESA group in the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (status unclear); and (iii) submit a formal request to join the EU-ESA5 EPA and table a market access offer to the Commission.

An accession to the EPA would eventually require a joint EU-ESA5 decision in line with the EPA's procedures.

Despite all the explanation provided by the Commission, to date, the Maldives have neither submitted a formal request to join the EPA nor tabled a market access offer. These steps are needed before a provisional timeline for the Maldives' potential accession to the EU-ESA5 EPA can be established.