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EU-Morocco fisheries deal

Double rejection of Morocco fisheries deal by EP committees

The budget and development committees of the European Parliament voted on Monday evening to reject extending the EU-Morocco fisheries partnership agreement. The votes, which were passed by large majorities, send a strong message ahead of a vote in the lead fisheries committee, that MEPs oppose this agreement, which is at odds with international law, is financially unsound and undermines development goals.

The EU-Morocco fisheries agreement is currently up for renewal. Under the agreement, the EU fishing fleet has the right to fish in Western Saharan waters despite the fact the government of Morocco has no right to trade the resources of the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara under international law. According to international law, any exploitation of natural resources there can only proceed if they are to the benefit of, and according to the wishes of, the people of Western Sahara.

With the previous agreement having expired in February this year, the Commission has proposed a temporary extension. The revised agreement requires the consent of the European Parliament before being concluded.

In addition to the serious questions about its legality, an evaluation of the previous agreement shows that it does not make economic sense for the EU. The EU spends €36 million spent on fishing permits, but the economic return is only €0.65 for each Euro spent on permits.

On top of this, there are major concerns about the state of fish stocks in the region, with almost all stocks either fully- or overexploited. The only exception to this is the sardine stock off Western Sahara.

From a development perspective, the agreement has not had any substantial positive impact on the Moroccan fishing sector.

Procedurally, it is unacceptable that the Commission has involved the Parliament in such a late stage. The one year extension entered into force February this year and it has taken almost a year before the European Parliament is given a chance to approve or reject the agreement.

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