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Press release | 12.02.2019

EU-Morocco fisheries agreement violates international humanitarian law

Fisheries

Today, Members of the European Parliament voted in favour of the planned fisheries agreement between the European Union and Morocco. The vast majority of the catches under this agreement are however to take place to the waters of Western Sahara, occupied by Morocco. This agreement contravenes international law and violates the rulings of the European Court of Justice of February 2018 and December 2016.

On the initiative of the **Greens/EFA** group in the European Parliament, MEPs voted on whether to refer the agreement to the European Court of Justice, before voting on giving consent to the EU-Morocco agreement. Unfortunately the majority of the Parliament voted to allow the agreement to proceed without the scrutiny of the ECJ.

Linnéa Engström, Fisheries spokesperson for the **Greens/EFA** group, had called for the agreement to be referred to the European Court of Justice:

"The EU-Morocco agreement violates international humanitarian law and thwarts the peace efforts of the United Nations in the region. The European Commission is putting a stamp of legitimacy on the illegal occupation of Western Sahara in order to buy access to the rich fishing grounds off Western Sahara. This agreement was concluded without the consent of the people of Western Sahara in direct contravention of the ECJ's ruling. It's time for the EU to develop a more suitable fisheries policy than one that takes advantage of unresolved conflicts at the cost of others abroad."

Bodil Valero, Human Rights spokesperson for the **Greens/EFA** group comments:

"This agreement should undergo thorough scrutiny of the EU's highest court in Luxembourg. EU tax-payers money should not be used to undermine international law. The European Union must not make itself the henchman of authoritarian governments that disregard human rights. This agreement is an attack on international law and multilateralism, both of which the European Union is supposed to respect."

Background:

The EU-Morocco Agreement is intended to secure access for EU fishing fleets to the fishing grounds off Morocco and Western Sahara. 90% of fishing would take place off the coast of Western Sahara. In return, the European Commission is offering the Moroccan government 160 million euros over a period of four years. In February 2018, the European Court of Justice declared the previous fisheries agreement between the European Union and Morocco inapplicable to Western Sahara on grounds of international law. The current text of the agreement differs only slightly from the previous text.

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Responsible MEPs



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