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EU-Morocco fisheries agreement/Western Sahara

MEPs put narrow interests of Spanish and French fishing industry ahead of international law

The European Parliament fisheries committee today voted to recommend the EP give its consent to a controversial EU-Morocco fisheries agreement (1). The Greens strongly condemned the outcome of the vote, with **Raül Romeva** stating:

"By recommending the EP endorse the controversial EU-Morocco fisheries deal, a majority of MEPs on the fisheries committee today voted to put the narrow interests of the Spanish and French fishing industries ahead of the respect of international law and the rights of the people of Western Sahara.

"Given the considerable concerns with the legality of the agreement, and the European Parliament's role in defending democracy and basic rights, we hope that the rest of the European Parliament will ignore today's vote and vote to reject the agreement when the plenary vote takes place.

"Politically, the agreement is a blot on the EU's foreign policy, but its compatibility with international law is also highly questionable. It is nothing short of scandalous that the EU is wilfully seeking to extend this agreement, under which the Moroccan government grants fishing rights to the EU fishing fleet to fish in the waters of Western Sahara, where it has no right to do so. Ultimately, the only responsible course of action for the Commission is to revise this agreement with a view to excluding the waters of Western Sahara for which the government of Morocco has no responsibility."

(1) The EU Commission is seeking to renew the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement, which would again give the EU 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. 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. While the lead fisheries committee today voted to recommend consent, the EP development and budget committees previously voted to reject the agreement. The agreement will now be voted on by the EP in plenary session.

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