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EFA MEPs demand EU to negotiate fisheries deal with Western Sahara

Today, 17 July 2023 the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement expires and its illegal nature as sanctioned by the EU Court of Justice prevents its renewal. The agreement includes the territorial waters of Western Sahara, directly benefiting Morocco which is unilaterally occupying the territory in violation of international law and in total disregard of the Saharawi People's right to self-determination.

The EU-Morocco fisheries agreement was strongly criticised by the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament upon its adoption as it was deemed illegal under international and European law.

In exchange for the granting of fishing licences, Morocco obtained a considerable financial contribution amounting to 208 million euros over 4 years. This EU contribution consisted mainly of sectoral support to expand the Moroccan occupier's fisheries sector and helped reinforce the colonisation of Saharawi territory by relocating Moroccans to the area at the expense of the local Sahrawi population, most of whom have been forced into exile in refugee camps in southern Algeria since 1975.

Ana Miranda, EFA MEP and Vice-Chair of the Western Sahara member said:

"It is time for a historic demand of the Saharawi people to be fulfilled, now that the EU-Morocco fisheries protocol adopted four years ago is coming to an end"

"I am confident that the final judgement to be delivered by the EU Court of Justice - which already annulled the agreement in September 2021 - will be in favour of the Saharawi people.

"The logical thing to do is to negotiate with their legitimate representatives, in this case, the Polisario Front".

"From Greens/EFA We will continue to support, as we have done until now, the demands of the Polisario Front and denounce the plundering of the land and fishing resources of the Saharawi people,"

François Alfons, EFA MEP and member of the Western Sahara intergroup said:

"International law cannot apply to Ukraine and be ignored in Western Sahara: when a country invades its neighbour as Morocco has done, it must be punished and not considered as a partner with whom illegal agreements are made.

"The Commission and all those who contributed to these illegal agreements must be held to account!"

"Only a fisheries agreement with the Polisario Front, the legitimate representative of this territory recognised by the United Nations, would allow European fishermen to continue fishing in this area while respecting quotas and preserving this fisheries resource, which is the inalienable heritage of the Saharawi people"

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