

Frente POLISARIO

Relaciones exteriores

Representacion para Europa



PRESS RELEASE

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On May 17th, 2018 the Trade committee of the European Parliament held a debate on the state of play of the negotiations with Morocco on the amendment of the protocols on rules of origin under the EU-Morocco Association agreement and Fisheries partnership agreement in relation to Western Sahara. We value the firm and responsible positions expressed by the members of the Trade committee in defence of the EU and international legality and requesting the EU Commission to abide strictly to the rule of law.

We note with concern the intention outlined during the debate by the Commission representatives to extend both the FTA and FPA with Morocco in order to cover the occupied Western Sahara. It is clear that the envisaged procedures aim to circumvent the rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

The Commission representatives showed haughtiness and blatant disregard towards the decisions of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). In an attempt to distort the legal terminology used by the Court, the Commission officials dared to use the Moroccan illegal and unfounded terminology of “the southern provinces” when referring to the territories of Western Sahara occupied by Morocco. A terminology that is in full contradiction with the United Nations’ resolutions and shows contempt of the international status of Western Sahara as a non-self-governing territory subject to a UN-led decolonization process. Moreover, by using such provocative language and adopting the Moroccan occupier’s narrative, the Commission undermines the long-standing EU diplomatic position on Western Sahara.

Adding insult to injury, the repeated reference by the Commission officials during the hearing to the term “local population” instead of the “people of Western Sahara” was another illustration of the Commission’s disrespect of the people of Western Sahara and the members of the European Parliament, and of its attempt to distort the reality on the ground and marginalize their UN-recognized Representative, the POLISARIO Front.

In this respect, referring to its first ruling, the ECJ clearly stated on 27 February 2018 clearly *“if the territory of Western Sahara were to be included within the scope of the Fisheries Agreement, that would be contrary to certain rules of general international law that are applicable in relations between the EU and Kingdom of Morocco, inter alia the principle of self-determination”*

The EU Commission conduct that consists in dragging the European institutions into the illegal plunder of Western Sahara’ natural resources is a very risky approach.

The EU Commission did not seek the consent of the people of Western Sahara nor engage in responsible and meaningful negotiations with their UN-recognized Representative, the POLISARIO Front. Instead, the EU Commission chose to replace the consent of the Saharawi people by a so-called “consultation process” and to replace the people of Western Sahara by the “local population” where Moroccan settlers are a majority. The so-called consultation process was a failure contrary to the Commission claims, since the largest part of the people of Western Sahara displaced to the refugee camps and neighboring countries were totally excluded from these talks. As a response, all Saharawi civil society NGOs declined to participate in such a manoeuver due to the lack of transparency and credibility.

The people of Western Sahara have nothing to gain from exploitation and export of their natural resources against their consent. On the contrary, the application of both FTA and FPA agreements to the occupied Western Sahara will only be beneficial to the occupying power, Morocco by providing it with the financial means to sustain to its illegal occupation of their homeland. The local benefits claimed by the EU Commission under both agreements negotiated with and implemented through the occupying power, are clearly excluding the Saharawi people and even those living in the occupied territories of Western Sahara.

Instead of contributing constructively to the decolonization process in Western Sahara, the EU Commission, by pushing to amend the FTA and the FPA agreements with Morocco to include Western Sahara in its territorial scope is hampering the efforts of the UN secretary general’ personal envoy Mr. Horst Kohler and violating the European and international law.

We call upon the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament to take action to prevent the violation of the core principles and values of the EU and to put in place the necessary measures for the immediate implementation of the ECJ rulings in order to put an end to one of the most irresponsible and illegal cases of organized plundering of the resources of a colonized people living under foreign occupation.

Finally, we remind the EU Commission officials that in the conduct of international diplomacy, words matter, in relation to Western Sahara just as much as towards any other part of the world.

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Frente POLISARIO to Europe