

**Question for written answer E-003951/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Fiona Hall (ALDE)

Subject: Western Sahara and the EU-Morocco Free Trade Agreement

Negotiations between Morocco and the European Union on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) are due to begin in Rabat on 22 April 2013. Previous trade agreements between the EU and Morocco have, controversially, been implemented without reference to the Saharawi people in the occupied zones of Western Sahara, the territory that has been illegally annexed by Morocco since 1975.

If the occupied zones of Western Sahara are not explicitly excluded from the Agreement, the DCFTA risks impacting negatively on the UN-sponsored peace process in Western Sahara. The agreement could allow Morocco to make substantial economic gains from its occupation of Western Sahara, acting as a further disincentive to cooperate with the UN decolonisation process.

31 Saharawi civil society organisations wrote to the Commissioner for Trade, Karel De Gucht, on 26 June 2012 urging that Western Sahara be clearly and explicitly excluded from all future trade deals between the EU and Morocco. The letter stated that none of the signatory organisations (which represent the vast majority of Saharawi civil society organisations in Western Sahara, along with the Saharawi refugee camps in Algeria) had ever been consulted on any of the previous EU-Morocco trade agreements which were, nevertheless, implemented in Western Sahara.

The Polisario Front – the Saharawi people’s political representative at the UN peace negotiation table – has referred EU-Morocco trade agreements covering fish and agricultural produce to the European Court of Justice.

1. Will the Commission explicitly exclude the territories of Western Sahara from the DCFTA?
2. If the Commission does not intend to exclude the territories of Western Sahara from the DCFTA, what will be the strategy for ensuring that the Saharawi people are genuinely and transparently consulted on the Agreement?