

**Question for written answer E-004499/2015  
to the Commission**  
Rule 130  
**Bart Staes (Verts/ALE)**

Subject: Morocco's phosphate mining in Western Sahara

At the start of this month, the Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW) published a study<sup>1</sup> on Morocco's illegal extraction of phosphate from Saharan mines. There have been conflicts in this region ever since it was annexed by Morocco in 1975, and UN security forces are in place to calm the situation.

Ever since then, phosphorus has been extracted from the Bou Craa mine and exported to the rest of the world, to the benefit of the Moroccan government and to the detriment of the Sahrawi people. The extraction, sale and purchase of this conflict mineral are unethical and constitute a human rights violation.

1. The Association Agreement concluded between the EU and Morocco in 1996<sup>2</sup> emphasises the importance of complying with the UN Charter and respecting human rights. The annexation of Western Sahara and the mining of phosphate in this region are therefore in conflict with the provisions of this agreement. Will the Commission take action to end the violation of the Association Agreement?
2. 400 000 tonnes of phosphate have been sold to Lifosa AB, a Lithuanian company which is in Russian hands. How will the Commission impose any future legislation relating to conflict minerals on foreign companies which trade within EU Member States?
3. Will the Commission take yet further necessary steps, in addition to the voluntary certification system<sup>3</sup>, to put a stop to the mining and sale of conflict minerals (carried out by Morocco)?

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<sup>1</sup> WSRW report: [http://wsrw.org/files/dated/2015-03-11/p\\_for\\_plunder\\_2014\\_web.pdf](http://wsrw.org/files/dated/2015-03-11/p_for_plunder_2014_web.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Association Agreement: [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/march/tradoc\\_127906.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/march/tradoc_127906.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014\\_2019/documents/afet/pa/1043/1043090/1043090nl.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/afet/pa/1043/1043090/1043090nl.pdf)