



MEPs reject extension of the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement and call for a better deal

Plenary sessions

Parliament voted on Wednesday to reject a proposed extension of the controversial EU-Morocco fisheries agreement. It called on the Commission to negotiate a new, more environmentally and economically beneficial deal, which should take account of the interests of the Sahrawi population. The current protocol, which has applied provisionally since 28 February 2011, will cease to apply immediately.

MEPs voted in favour of a report drafted by Carl Haglund (ALDE, FI) which called on Parliament not to extend the current arrangements, mainly for economic, ecological and legal reasons. In so doing, they rejected a Fisheries Committee proposal to extend the contested protocol, by 296 votes to 326, with 58 abstentions.

"This should not be seen as a hostile move towards our partners; it should rather be seen as us taking ourselves seriously on a very important issue," said Mr Haglund in the debate before the vote. Mr Haglund stressed that he is in favour of a future agreement with Morocco, but it must be a better one. "There is no doubt that we all want a good agreement", he added.

Mr Haglund argued that the one-year extension of the current protocol was unacceptable under the terms proposed by the European Commission because of its low cost-benefit ratio for the EU, the excessive exploitation of demersal stocks, the very limited contribution of EU funds to the development of local fisheries policy and the lack of proof that EU money benefits the local population of Western Sahara.

New protocol to be more sustainable

In a separate resolution, MEPs stressed that a new protocol must be economically, ecologically and socially sustainable and mutually beneficial.

In the future, the allocation of fishing opportunities should be based on scientific advice and EU vessels should be allowed to fish only surplus stocks. Financial support for the development of local fisheries must be used properly and more efficiently while monitoring of where the money goes must be improved.

MEPs also called on the Commission to ensure that a new protocol fully respects international law and benefits all affected local populations, including the Sahrawi people.

The resolution was approved with 544 votes in favour, 123 against and 33 abstentions.

What's next?

The rejected protocol, which has applied provisionally since 28 February 2011, will cease to apply immediately. Parliament expects the Commission to advance negotiations on a new protocol so as to avoid any provisional application in the future.

Procedure: Consent and non-legislative resolution

Contact :

Press release

Ján JAKUBOV

BXL: (+32) 2 28 32119

STR: (+33) 3 881 74005

PORT: (+32) 498 98 35 90

EMAIL: fish-press@europarl.europa.eu

Paola BUONADONNA

ADDINFO: (+44) 207 227 43 35

STR: (+33) 3 881 74822

PORT: (+44) 7 786 060 531

EMAIL: Press-en@europarl.europa.eu

EMAIL: paola.buonadonna@europarl.europa.eu