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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the agreement between the EU and Morocco concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products and fishery products (2012/2522(RSP))

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European Parliament resolution on the agreement between the EU and Morocco concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products and fishery products (2012/2522(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Barcelona Declaration of 28 November 1995 which established a partnership between the European Union and Southern Mediterranean countries,
 - having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Union and the Member States of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part,
 - having regard to the Council decision of 14 October 2005 to authorise negotiations with Morocco on the reciprocal liberalisation of agricultural products, processed agricultural products, fish and fishery products,
 - having regard to the proposed Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products, processed agricultural products, fish and fishery products, the replacement of Protocols 1, 2 and 3 and their Annexes and amendments to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part,
 - having regard to the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 25th May 2011 on ‘A new response to a changing Neighbourhood’ COM(2011) 303 final,
 - having regard to the consent procedure pursuant to Article 207 and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C7-0201/2011),
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the new political landscape determined in the Southern Mediterranean after the recent events of the Arab Spring required a change in the EU's approach and a stronger partnership with these countries and whereas the EU approach has linked any form of a stronger partnership to a real process of democratisation and rule of law in these countries (more for more approach); whereas this new EU approach had been clearly defined by the Commission in its recent communications; whereas Morocco has accomplished over the past months radical steps towards a substantial process of democratisation in a more peaceful and stable way than other countries of the region;

- B. whereas the strengthening of trade relations and a balanced and progressive commercial liberalization with these countries is an important component of this new approach;
- C. whereas Article 16 of the EU Morocco Association Agreement, in force since 1 March 2000, provides that the European Community and Morocco will gradually implement greater liberalization of their reciprocal trade in agricultural products, processed agricultural products, fish and fishery products;
- D. whereas agriculture represents between 15% and 20% of Morocco 's GDP and 12% of the Moroccan exports and employs 38% of the Moroccan workforce, with peaks of 75% in the rural areas and therefore the stability and expansion of this sector is extremely important for the political stability of the country; whereas it is essential to take into account the negative effects of the trade liberalisation process on some sensitive agriculture productions in the EU, such tomatoes, which have to compete with the Moroccan exports after complying with higher environment, social and safety standards;
- E. whereas in 2009 Morocco adopted the Moroccan Green Plan which aims at developing private investments as well as the small and medium size enterprises with substantial aids from the central government; whereas Morocco has started to decentralize the governmental role in order to reinforce the role of the rural communities;
- F. whereas the European Union is fully engaged in supporting this process of modernization, decentralization and more generally the development of the agricultural sector, which is crucial in the economic and social development of the agricultural sector for the political stabilization;
- G. whereas the proposed Agreement immediate liberalises 55% of tariffs on the EU's agricultural and fisheries products (rising from 33%) and 70% of tariffs on Morocco's agricultural and fisheries products within 10 years (rising from 1%);
- H. whereas Morocco is one of the four Southern Mediterranean countries for which the Council has authorised negotiating directives for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA); whereas trade in agricultural products will form part of these negotiations;
- I. whereas Morocco as part of bilateral cooperation has to implement food safety projects with aim of upgrading its SPS legislation, bringing it closer to the acquis and the EU quality standards;
- J. whereas this protocol has raised some concerns in the European Union in the agricultural sector, in particular in some regions of the Mediterranean areas which could be negatively affected by some specific liberalization measures of the Agreement;
- K. whereas the European Union has to take into account the most vulnerable European agricultural sectors and the chance of a sustainable development of disadvantaged and weak regions within the EU is not to be put at risk;

Political context

1. Believes that trade liberalisation and progressive integration into the EU's internal market can be powerful instruments for the development of Southern Mediterranean countries and help alleviate the widespread poverty and unemployment that drives economic, migratory and security problems in the region;
2. Underlines that, in the wake of the Arab Spring, the EU has a responsibility to make full use of its trade and economic capabilities to aid the transition of those Southern Mediterranean countries which have recently democratised; in this respect it considers that Morocco has taken significant steps towards the consolidation of democracy by reforming the Constitution and conducting the recent electoral process in a peaceful way;
3. Considers it essential that trade and investment initiatives should aim to benefit all sections of society and be particularly targeted at SMEs and small farmers; in this context, notes that over 80% of Morocco's farmers hold less than five hectares of land and therefore welcomes the support of the Confédération marocaine de l'agriculture et du développement rural (COMADER) for the Agreement;

The Agreement

4. Stresses that the Agreement, given the importance and the weight of the agricultural sector in Morocco, also as a major source of employment plays a key role in its economic development as well as in the political stabilization, since it offers new opportunities for exports to the EU which is the major foreign market for Moroccan products: considers that it will also provide opportunities for the EU's agricultural industry, particularly in processed foods; points out that EU exporters will eventually benefit from the removal of Moroccan import tariffs for 70% of agricultural and fisheries product lines which will save an estimated €100 million in customs duties;
5. Welcomes the additional non-tariff measures included in the agreement such as extra protection for European GIs, enhanced safeguard mechanisms and SPS measures; hopes that the adoption of this agreement will pave the way for a further liberalization in the service market; furthermore, recalls that the EU and Morocco have agreed a dispute settlement mechanism which allows the EU to gain redress if Morocco does not respect the terms of the Agreement;
6. Notes the concerns of some European industry groups at increased duty-free quotas for sensitive fruits and vegetable imports, given the sensitiveness and vulnerability of the agricultural sectors, in particular in the Mediterranean regions which can be negatively affected by this liberalization process, recognises the need to maintain appropriate controls and duty free trade quotas on the entry into the European Union of some Moroccan fruits and vegetables that could put at risk the market balance of sensitive agriculture productions such as tomatoes in Spain;
7. Considers that the EU/Morocco Agreement provides specific institutional arrangements and mechanisms, such as cooperation in order to avoid disturbances of markets, experts groups held by Commission with third countries, including Morocco, the subcommittee

on agricultural trade in the framework of Association Agreement management, exchange of information on policies and data on production, as well as the safeguard clause under Article 7 of the Protocol;

8. Is concerned by complaints alleging fraud in the entry price system for fruits and vegetables as well as in the real monitoring of duty free quotas of some products; calls the European Commission and Member States to strengthen control mechanisms; in this regard, notes the proposals to align the modalities of implementation of the entry price system to the Community Customs Code in the next reform of the CAP, but considers that this has to be accompanied by a modification of the implementing regulation of the Agriculture Common Market Organisation to introduce efficient control measures; underlines that complaints from European operators have been brought to OLAF and to the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament and that this committee has asked the European Commission to change the entry price system in order to end up with fraud;
9. Underlines that access to the EU's internal market should be conditional on meeting certain hygiene and safety standards and welcomes the positive Food and Veterinary Office report in 2011; welcomes the emphasis in the Agreement on SPS measures and calls for technical assistance to be central to the negotiations for a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement (DCFTA); Asks the European Commission to promote equivalent measures and controls between Morocco and the European Union on environment, social and food safety standards .in order to assure a fair competition between the two markets;
10. Calls on the European Commission to provide a deep impact assessment of the Protocol focused on the most Mediterranean vulnerable regions of the European Union and the most sensitive sectors and regularly inform, each six months, the European Parliament on the outcome of monitoring the exchanges of agricultural products, in particular the most sensitive products, noting that the agreement contains mechanisms that should be used in the event that the EU agricultural sectors suffer serious disturbances and injuries as a consequences of massive flows between the two Parties, including the temporary suspension of the Protocol in case of serious and systematic violations;

Broader trade and economic issues

11. Emphasises that in order to further strengthen the EU-Morocco economic relationship with mutual benefits negotiations of the DCFTA should include all the different aspects linked to the agriculture sectors, an in depth chapter on geographical indications, labour and sustainable development clauses which include the recognition of trade union rights and initiative on corporate social responsibility, as well as market opening for services and public procurement and investment chapters for mutual benefits, as well as a sufficient time horizon for the reciprocal liberalization of agriculture products; these negotiations should fully take into account the outcome of the impact assessment conducted on the most vulnerable regions and sectors of the European Union which could be negatively affected by the Protocol;

12. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the future Agreements fully respect international law and benefit all the local populations affected;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EP Delegation for Relations with the Maghreb Countries, the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Parliament and Government of Morocco.