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Plenary sitting

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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 European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products, processed agricultural products, fish and fishery products (2012/2522(RSP))

Metin Kazak, Marietje Schaake
on behalf of the ALDE Group

European Parliament resolution on the Agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products, processed agricultural products, fish and fishery products (2012/2522(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Barcelona Declaration of 28th 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 14th 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 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 its legislative resolution of 14th December on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Protocol between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco setting out the fishing opportunities and financial compensation provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Kingdom of Morocco,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Western Sahara,
- 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 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 EU maintains a surplus in trade in goods with Morocco which reached €5.4 billion in 2010;
- B. whereas the EU has a substantial agricultural, fisheries and processed foods trade surplus with Southern Mediterranean countries of over €4 billion but a bilateral agricultural, fisheries and processed foods trade deficit with Morocco which was €871 million in 2010;
- C. whereas agriculture represented 16.4% of Moroccan GDP in 2009 and employs over 40% of the Moroccan workforce; whereas agriculture represented 5.1% of EU GDP in 2009 and employs 1.1% of the European workforce;
- D. whereas the Agreement immediately 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%);
- E. whereas the Agreement will allow greater access for European exporters to a neighbouring market with rapidly changing consumption patterns and increasing demographics;
- F. 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;
- G. whereas the Western Sahara is only implicitly excluded from the trade provisions of the Agreement and it is possible that Western Saharan products could in fact benefit from the preferential access granted by this Agreement into the EU's internal market and vice-versa;
- H. whereas any trade agreement concerning Western Sahara must be conducted for the benefit of the Sahrawi people and in accordance with their wishes as determined by international law;

General Considerations

1. Believes that opening of markets 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; considers that, for this potential to be realised, the EU must be prepared to make trade concessions in sensitive sectors such as agriculture;
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 or, like Morocco, are taking significant steps towards democratisation; welcomes the efforts made by Morocco towards democracy and sustainable development; calls for the EU to support these measures and to strongly link this agreement and the deepening of its trade strategy with Morocco to these efforts;

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 Moroccan 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; recalls that food security has a social, environmental and cultural dimension, in addition to its economic aspects;
4. Underlines that, following the Lisbon Treaty, the Parliament must be involved at every stage of trade negotiations and give its consent to agreements; therefore, calls on the Commission and Council to respect these obligations with regards to future protocols agreed with Morocco under the Association Agreement and the potential deep and comprehensive free trade agreement (DCFTA);

The Agreement

5. Stresses that the Agreement will 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 per year in customs duties once fully implemented;
6. Is concerned about the consequences for some agricultural regions in Southern Europe and calls on the EU to embark on genuine reforms in order to keep Euro-Mediterranean agriculture competitive; notes the concerns of certain agricultural sectors, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, peaches and apricots, at increased duty-free quotas for sensitive fruits and vegetable imports; however, underlines that the increase in duty free quotas represents a tiny percentage of European production (e.g. roughly 0.65% for tomatoes), and that these imports are further restricted by seasonal allocations and the entry price system;
7. Welcomes the additional non-tariff measures included in the agreement such as negotiations to provide extra protection for European GIs, enhanced safeguard mechanisms and sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures (SPS); calls on the Commission to provide further clarifications to European industry on the process and mechanisms for activating the safeguard clauses; furthermore, recalls that the EU and Morocco have agreed a dispute settlement mechanism which allows the parties to gain redress if a party does not respect the terms of the Agreement;

Broader Trade and Economic issues

8. Is concerned by complaints from European industry groups alleging fraud in the entry price system; in this regard, notes the proposals to align the modalities of implementation of the entry price system to the Community Customs Code in the latest reform of the CAP; at the same time, underlines that no formal complaints have been brought to OLAF since 2005;
9. Underlines that access to the EU's internal market should be conditional on meeting sanitary, phyto-sanitary and environmental standards and welcomes the positive Food and Veterinary Office report on Morocco's compliance with these standards 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); invites the Commission to provide assistance to Morocco in water management to prevent deterioration in quantity and quality, to allow better access to drinking water and improve wastewater management; calls on the European Food Safety Agency and the European Environment Agency to provide their expertise, as requested, to Member States to assess the quality of imported products;

10. Emphasises that, like many developing countries, Morocco faces significant challenges in guaranteeing labour rights; notes that, despite ratifying most of the relevant International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and adopting legislation banning child labour, concerns remain over freedom of association and child labour; considers that the DCFTAs should include assistance with the implementation of ILO conventions, ratifying unsigned core conventions (e.g. Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (N° 87)) and initiatives on corporate social responsibility within the sustainable development chapter;
11. Regrets that the Commission has failed to convincingly clarify the status of the Western Sahara under the trade provisions of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement; believes that such a clarification is necessary to end the current legal uncertainty and would also benefit EU agreements in other sectors with Morocco where protocols have to be frequently renewed; therefore urges the Commission to work towards a comprehensive approach regarding the Western Sahara whilst taking into account the ongoing negotiations at the UN to find a lasting political solution; calls on the Commission to provide substantial development aid to the Sahrawi people in order to improve their living conditions;
12. 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.