

Sujet: EXTREMELY IMPORTANT: CONFIDENTIAL/DO NOT SHARE

De : Edward Gabriel <ed.gabriel@thegabrielco.com>

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Pour : taibfassi <taibfassi@maec.gov.ma>, "abdel-ouahab@hotmail.com" <abdel-ouahab@hotmail.com>, "bahae_lil@yahoo.com" <bahae_lil@yahoo.com>, "SE@interieur.gov.ma" <SE@interieur.gov.ma>, "laraichi1@gmail.com" <laraichi1@gmail.com>

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Begin report:

"... I had a meeting with the President of the Fisheries Committee in the European Parliament Carmen Fraga. After a brief introduction, I obtained the following information regarding the Fishery Agreement EU - Morocco.

1) Mrs. Fraga believes that the maximum that can be achieved is the approval of the extension of the EU - Morocco Fishery Protocol for another year. According to her, a revision of the Fishery agreement with Morocco is very unlikely.

She mentioned several reasons.

- There is widespread resistance in the EP against so-called mixed fishery agreements which apparently are very costly for the EU.. A mixed agreement consists of more fish types than for instance an agreement on Tuna. The current 5 mixed agreements reportedly cost the EU € 160 million. The EU is paying Morocco € 38 million under the current mixed fishery agreement; according to some MEPs, such costs are almost much higher than the value of the fish harvested under them.

- There are political arguments having to do with human rights. **Opponents claim that Morocco is not respecting the human rights of the Saharan people and not supporting the Saharan people financially. Mrs. Fraga is not persuaded by this argument.** She accepts the position of the Moroccan government that everybody who lives in the Western Sahara belongs to the Saharan people. The Moroccan government can prove it spends a lot of money on improvements of ports in the Western Sahara, together with EU money. The purpose was to spend the Fishery money for the fishing sector, which is what the Moroccan government did.

- The EU Commissioner for Fishery, Maria Damanaki is not willing, according to Mrs. Fraga, to get a new Fishery agreement with Morocco. Mrs. Fraga told me that the President of the Commission pushed Mrs. Damanaki to extend the Protocol for one year. Commissioner Damanaki cites alleged violations of human rights by the Moroccan government.

2) The European Parliament is still considering whether it will give its consent (yes or no) to the extension of the Protocol. The Rapporteur, Mr. Haglund from the ALDE political group, the liberals, is not in favour of the extension of the Protocol and Commissioner Damanaki is not helpful either. Nevertheless Mrs. Fraga expects some pressure from the President of the Commission and believes that a small majority in favour of extending the Protocol may be mobilized. It appears that only the EPP and the ECR political groups are in favour now: the Social Democrats, Greens, Gue and ALDE are against. It is important to convince members from those parties to vote in favour; otherwise the Protocol will be rejected by the EP. **She told me that Polisario is very active in lobbying MEPs to vote against.**

Mrs. Fraga expects the vote on the Protocol in the Fishery Committee to take place either week 23 of May or week of 14 of June. Then a Plenary EP vote is required possibly week of 4 of July.

3) Mrs. Fraga elaborated why she believes that a renewed fishery agreement is not likely. The current agreement is very expensive for the EU and the yield is low. Moreover, only a few member states are using the rights under

the current fishery agreement: Spain, Netherlands, Baltic Republics and Poland. In order to change the current Fishery agreement it would be necessary for the Commission to take the initiative to prepare a draft agreement which could be discussed with the Moroccan government and later with the EP and Council before the Commission would prepare a new agreement. That is the way in which the Commission is proceeding in the case of Mauritania. Mrs. Fraga does not expect the Commission to take that initiative in the case of Morocco, unless Commissioner Damanaki is turned around by the President of the Commission. In order to overcome all the difficulties within the EP regarding human rights and the definition who is a Saharan, the best approach would be delete from the Agreement's coverage the portion of the Atlantic Ocean around the Western Sahara. However that is not interesting for the Member States because that part of the Atlantic Ocean has the highest yield and for the Moroccan government it is not acceptable to take out a part of its territory. In the Council there is also support from Portugal and France. The Commission is organizing a 13 May conference on this issue.

4) Finally Mrs. Fraga mentioned that not only the Fishery agreement with Morocco is a problem. The Association Agreement regarding agriculture is another one. The Agricultural Committee in the European Parliament is strongly against the agreement and the Trade committee (INTA), as the lead committee, still has to vote on it.

5) Politically those developments mean that a mix of arguments is playing a role; the sharing of benefits to the Saharan people is only one of the arguments. **It appears that the Moroccan government has fulfilled its obligation to report to the EU how it is spending EU money from the Fishery agreement, i.e., on developments of ports in Western Sahara.** Nonetheless opposition remains in the EP for other reasons such as objections against a mixed Fishery Agreement.”

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