EC/Morocco Fisheries Partnership Agreement

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The committee adopted the report by Daniel VARELA SUANZES-CARPEGNA (EPP-ED, ES) broadly approving the proposed fisheries agreement between the EC and Morocco, subject to a few amendments under the consultation procedure. In line with their traditional position concerning the conclusion or renewal of fisheries agreements, MEPs wanted Parliament to be provided with better information enabling it to assess the agreement and therefore called for "an annual report on the implementation of the agreement" before Parliament gives its go-ahead for the negotiation of the next protocol. They also wanted to see greater transparency, including the possibility for a Member of the EP as well as representatives of the the fisheries sector to attend the meetings of the Joint Committee as observers.

Moreover, in view of the politically sensitive issue of the the relationship between Morocco and Western Sahara, a number of MEPs were troubled by the inclusion of the waters of Western Sahara in the fishing agreement. They were concerned that by signing an agreement with Morocco giving the EU fishing fleet access to waters off the coast of Western Sahara (i.e. south of the 27.4 degree line), the EU would be breaking its commitments to the UN. The committee therefore voted to add a clause stating that the agreement was approved "subject to its implementation in accordance with international law". It also introduced a new paragraph stipulating that, "in the event of evidence that the use to which the Agreement is being put is in contravention of international obligations, the Commission shall take immediate steps to suspend the Agreement."