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INDUSTRY NEWS

Europêche calls for Sahara-inclusive EU-Morocco deal

9 years ago

Europêche has called for a new Fisheries Agreement accommodating Western Sahara following a court ruling that the EU's deal with Morocco is valid while excluding Western Sahara and adjacent waters.



The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that the 2006 Fisheries Agreement "between the EU and Morocco is valid in so far as it is not applicable to Western Sahara and to its adjacent waters", a disputed territory that the ECJ previously said cannot be treated as a part of Morocco, but Europêche pointed out that as around 94% of catches under the agreement takes place in these waters, the decision "clearly disregards the importance of the agreement for the fisheries sector."

Beneficial agreement

Javier Garat, president of Europêche, said: "The current EU-Morocco Fisheries Agreement not only guarantees respect for international law and human rights, but has also been beneficial for both parties.

"This agreement has contributed to improve the sustainable management of fish resources in these rich fishing grounds and is crucial for the activity of up to 126 European vessels, 700 fishermen and 3.500 workers ashore. In terms of food security, the agreement allows to catch 83,000 tonnes per year, worth €80 million, which represents 5.6% of the total catches in the area.

"As reported by the European Commission, local communities in Western Sahara have been clearly benefiting from the EU fishing activities, landings and investments. We are committed to continue creating wealth and employment under the future fisheries agreement."

July expiry

The current agreement is in force since July 2014 and will expire on 14 July. Negotiations for a renewal of the agreement were scheduled, pending the outcome of the CJEU ruling.

In 2016, it was ruled that Western Sahara cannot be treated as a part of Morocco, meaning that no EU-Morocco trade deals can apply to the territory, but no ruling was made on the Fisheries Agreement between the EU and Morocco.

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