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Conclusions of the Natural Resources Workshop

44th EUCOCO

Vitoria- Gasteiz

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The 44th EUCOCO drew up a long-term report on the despoilment of the Sahrawi People's natural resources, whether it be their waters (their very fish-rich Atlantic coast), their land (the greenhouse crops of the Dakhla region, and the abundant sand), their subsoil (the phosphates of Boucrâa, one of the most important deposits in the world, of high quality), without counting their solar energy generating sunlight and their wind energy sources.

After the Spanish colonial occupation, the illegal Moroccan occupation of the territory of Western Sahara and the plundering of its resources benefited from the complicity of the European Union: the EU signed trade agreements with Rabat including the Sahrawi territory without saying so (2012) and then saying so (2019). But each time without the consent of the Sahrawi people, consent that can only be given by the Polisario Front, its legitimate and recognized representative, and when the Court of Justice of the European Union requires it to legalize these agreements.

Today, many governments, including Spain and France first, and various European economic actors continue to engage with Morocco in Western Sahara.



And so to plunder its resources.

Objective and questions asked by EUCOCO at our workshop:

1) Seeking the necessary consensus and synergies between different people and collectives in solidarity to put an end to the plundering of the Sahrawi people's natural resources.

We said the need, for all the solidarity present - Spanish, French, Algerians, and many Sahrawis representing civil society associations - to coordinate and exchange very regularly on the facts and on the actions we undertake in favour of the sovereignty of the Sahrawi people over their natural resources. To this end, we exchanged widely the names of our respective organizations and emails.

2) How can we force the companies that profit from this plundering to put an end to this illegal and illegitimate practice of plundering Sahrawi natural resources?

Forcing is not easy in our capacity as only solidarity partners. It is by relying on the decisions of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that we can achieve this. Indeed, there is first of all the statement (December 2016) that Western Sahara is a separate and distinct territory from Morocco, and that the EU-Morocco trade agreements are therefore not applicable to the Sahara without the consent of the Sahrawi people. However, the latter can only be given by its



sole and legitimate representative, the Polisario Front.

However, new EU-Morocco cooperation and fisheries agreements extended to Western Sahara were signed in the first quarter of 2019 without the agreement of the Polisario Front. In April 2019, he then filed two actions for annulment before the ECJ for failure to seek his consent.

A first hearing of the EU Court of Justice (in Luxembourg) is announced for the very beginning of 2020, in January or February, and we are invited to attend in large numbers as it will be public. All questions can be put, in particular to representatives of the French government, as France is now the only EU Member State to have joined the trial alongside the European Commission and the European Council.

It is by obtaining the cancellation of these agreements that any legal framework - and therefore any legal security - will be taken away from European companies that would like to continue to exploit the natural resources of the Sahrawi people through Morocco. Thus the desired constraint will be obtained.

3) Can we assess the economic, social and moral harm inflicted on the Sahrawi people due to the despoilment of their property and bring a complaint against the States and companies involved?

The answer follows from what has just been said for the complaint: it is the removal of any legal framework, and therefore the annulment of the EU-Morocco agreements, that will make it possible to attack European States and



companies that would nevertheless continue to operate in Western Sahara under Moroccan occupation.

However, we have undertaken to 1) gather all the information on the companies and products currently concerned, and 2) to assess the economic, social and moral damage inflicted on the Sahrawi people in this way, in order to be able to disseminate educational information that convinces as many actors as possible on the ethical level, particularly in Europe.

4) How can parties, trade unions and other agents of society be held accountable to ensure that the new Spanish Government respects and enforces the sentences of the Court of Justice of the European Union?

Spain's moral responsibility, which abandoned the Sahrawi people in 1975 when it was supposed to protect them as an administering power, should be highlighted. It is undoubtedly at the general level of EUCOCO that we must establish how to raise awareness in this respect among all actors in Spanish society.