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WSC communication with the European External Action Service

Following a letter from the European Union's External Action Service (EEAS) to the Western Sahara Campaign UK in January this year, inviting us to a meeting, we replied asking for more information. The communication is in relation to the EEAS's supposed aim to consult our organisation in reference to seeking the permission of the Saharawi people regarding future EU-Morocco trade and fisheries agreements.

We never received a reply, or even the courtesy of an acknowledgement, to our second letter. Despite this the WSC is included in the list of organisations that engaged in consultation.

Below are the letters from the EEAS and our replies.

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30 January 2018

Addressed to:

- M. Mark Lutchford, Chair, Western Sahara Campaign UK
- Ms. Sara Eyckmans, Western Sahara Resource Watch- Belgium
- M. Abdy Yeganeh - Cc: Nour Bakr, Independent Diplomat- Brussels

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Following the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union of December 2016 on the EU-Morocco Agriculture Agreement, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) have undertaken a process to see how to conform to the said judgment.

In this context, the European Council sent directives to the European Commission and to the EEAS to negotiate an amendment to the agreement with Morocco with a view to preserving the EU trade preferences hitherto applied to the products originating in Western Sahara, while conforming to the judgment of the Court of Justice and without prejudice to the respective positions of the European Union on the statute of Western Sahara and of the Kingdom of Morocco on the said region.

I would like to invite you to an informal meeting which should allow the EEAS to present the work realised so far to this end and to seek your views on the related benefits that could be derived for the population concerned by the agreement.

This meeting will take place on 6 February at 14.30 in the premises of the EEAS, Rond-Point Schuman 9A, 1046 Brussels.

Please kindly confirm your presence to this meeting.
Yours sincerely,

Vincent Piket
Head of Maghreb Division (MENA.3)
European External Action Service (EEAS)
Tel.: +32 (0) 2 584-4047
Office: EEAS/PARC - 2/230
Address: 9A Rond Point Schuman, B-1046 Brussels – Belgium
www.eeas.europa.eu

2 February 2018

Dear Mr Piket

Thank you for your invitation to a meeting on 6 February 2018. I am sorry I was unable to reply earlier; I was away in London.

Unfortunately we are unable to arrange to travel to Brussels at such short notice. Please could you provide more information as to the purpose of the meeting as I understand that the agreement between the European Commission and Morocco has been initiated.

If you could send us details of the Saharawi groups that you have consulted and their views we would be able to express our views on the related benefits that could be derived for the Saharawi. However I should point out that we are a British organisation and do not represent Saharawi and cannot speak on their behalf.

In addition as any trade agreement depends on consent it would help to know from whom consent has been sought. I understand that you have not sought the consent of the Polisario Front, the recognized representatives of the Saharawi. Again it would help if you can tell me

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WESTERN SAHARA CAMPAIGN UK
The Western Sahara Campaign works in solidarity with the Saharawi people to generate political support in order to advance their right to self-determination and to promote their human rights. Our role is to lobby the UK Government and the EU. You can help us to ensure the UK does not ignore the voice of the Saharawi people.



Follow the news about EU's illegal fisheries in Western Sahara



The EU pays Morocco to fish in occupied Western Sahara.

if this is accurate, and if so clarify why not.

I look forward to receiving your reply to these questions.

Yours sincerely
John Gurr
Coordinator
Western Sahara Campaign
+44 1974 282214

2 February 2018

Dear Mr Gurr,

Thank you for your e-mail of 2 February.

In reply I can inform you that the text that was initialled by representatives of the Commission services and Morocco on 31 January is a technical document marking the end of the technical work on a draft amendment to the EU-Morocco Agriculture Agreement. As such, the initialled text is of no legal value. The next step is that the European Commission, in association with the European External Action Service (EEAS), will prepare its proposal to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

In this connection, the EEAS is now engaging in an inclusive consultation exercise with a view to reaching out to a wide spectrum of stakeholders potentially concerned by the aforementioned amendment. Contacts are being made with interlocutors, including NGOs, based inside as well as outside the EU. Our intention is to have contacts with as many interested parties as possible, each of them in their respective capacity.

Our exercise should be consistent with the European Court of Justice ruling of 21 December 2016, be without prejudice to the UN process on Western Sahara and have the socio-economic development of the people living in Western Sahara in mind.

I hope this clarifies the nature of the meeting and look forward to welcoming you in Brussels when you are able to travel or exchange with you through a VTC in the course of next week if more convenient.

Kind regards,

Vincent Piket

8 February 2018

Dear Mr Piket

Thank you for your reply and invitation.

However I still fail to see the purpose of discussion after the agreement has been initialled. Unless you are anticipating that the agreement will be changed after such discussion. In which case we would need to see the initialled agreement to engage in meaningful discussion, and we would need more information about the 'spectrum of stakeholders' you refer to.

I would be grateful if you could answer the other questions, in my previous e-mail, asking which Saharawi groups have been consulted and whether the opinion and consent of the Polisario Front has been sought.

I look forward to receiving your reply to these questions.

Yours sincerely

John Gurr

**No reply received, no further
correspondence entered into and no
meeting took place.**

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