

Brussels 18 May

Invitation to the inter-parliamentary conference *The EU and Western Sahara: After the ECJ rulings* on June 7 in the European Parliament

As Members of the European Parliament and the European Parliament Intergroup for Western Sahara, we are pleased to invite you to an inter-parliamentary conference in solidarity with the people of Western Sahara. The conference will take place on June 7th 2018 at the European Parliament in Brussels.

It will host knowledgeable panel speakers as well as Members of the European and National Parliaments who will share their views and initiatives in relation to the Western Sahara conflict. Together, they will discuss the role and responsibilities of the European Union (EU), its Member States and European companies in this protracted conflict, and explore the political and legal possibilities to enforce European and international law and complete the decolonisation process undertaken by the United Nations (UN). The conference will seek to develop strategies for more coordinated and effective action at European level.

On 21 December 2016, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that no EU-Morocco trade or association agreement can be applied to Western Sahara, as it is a distinct and separate territory from Morocco, unless there is consent of the people of Western Sahara. The UN-recognised legal representative of the people of Western Sahara is POLISARIO Front. On 27 February 2018, the ECJ also ruled that the EU-Morocco Fisheries Agreement cannot be applied to Western Sahara or its adjacent waters, as that would violate the people of Western Sahara's right to self-determination. However, in spite of these ECJ rulings, the European Commission and the Member States are engaged in negotiations of new agriculture and fisheries agreements with Morocco in relation to Western Sahara.

The conference should be an appropriate occasion to reiterate our demand that the EU must respect international law, and abide by the rulings of the ECJ. It will also be an opportunity to gather European and National Members of Parliaments with representatives from law, NGOs, sectors and activists to discuss the EU responsibilities towards Western Sahara.

Please register no later than 31st May by sending an email to epconferencews@gmail.com. If you do not have valid accreditation to the EP, please include the following information: name, date of birth, nationality, type and number of ID (passport or ID-card) and organisation. You can collect your badge on the day of the event between 8.30 and 8.45 at the former info-point of the EP (Esplanade Solidarosc). Participants cover their own costs.

The draft programme is attached to this invitation.

Yours sincerely,

Jytte GUTELAND
Patrizia TOIA

Florent MARCELLESI
Bodil VALERO

Ivo VAJGL
Paloma LOPEZ BERMEJO



**DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE:
The EU and Western Sahara: After the ECJ rulings
7 June 2018, European Parliament, Brussels**

Date and time: June 7, 2018

Venue: European Parliament, Brussels, Room PHS 5B001

Time: 09:00-13:30

09:00-12:00

Keynote speakers

- Jytte Guteland, MEP S&D, Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup for Western Sahara
- Khatry Adouh, President of the Saharawi Parliament (tbc)
- Simonetta Saliera, President of the Legislative Assembly Regione Emilia-Romagna, Italy

1) The ECJ rulings on Western Sahara and their implications for the EU and its Member States

- Ivo Vajgl, MEP ALDE, vice chair of the European Parliament Intergroup for Western Sahara
- Representative from the European External Action Service (tbc)
- Gilles Devers, Lawyer of the Polisario Front in the European Court of Justice (ECJ)

2) The ECJ rulings and their implications for European companies and sectors

- Florent Marcellesi, MEP Greens, member of the European Parliament Intergroup for Western Sahara
- Erik Hagen, Chair, Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW)
- Representative from Confédération paysanne, France
- Andres Gongora, National Representative for the fruit and vegetable sector, Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos (COAG), Spain

3) How to strengthen European support to Western Sahara activists

- Paloma López Bermejo, MEP GUE/NGL, vice chair of European Parliament Intergroup for Western Sahara
- Saharawi peace/human rights activist
- Saharawi peace/human rights activist

12:00-12:30

Short break, sandwiches and coffee will be provided in the meeting room

12:30-13:30

4) Towards a pan-European strategy for Western Sahara

Exchange of views and experiences between the participating national and regional parliamentarians and intergroups, to be moderated by Jytte Guteland, MEP S&D, chair of the European Parliament Intergroup for Western Sahara