

MOROCCO AND THE WESTERN SAHARA

Saving the EU-Morocco Talks



ALBER & GEIGER LOBBYING STRENGTHENS EU-MOROCCO RELATIONS

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The EU-Morocco relationship is a ‘success-story’ in the southern neighbourhood.
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This is the statement the former EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle, made. Former Commissioner Füle went on to say that the EU-Morocco relation is now the “terms of reference in the region”. Alber & Geiger has played a key role in strengthening the bilateral relations. What started as lobbying to ease the renewal of two bilateral cooperation instruments quickly transformed into a political lobbying to eliminate the political impasse. Alber & Geiger helped improve Morocco’s strategic position in relation to Europe.

THE CHALLENGE

Alber & Geiger had to emphasize to the European institutions the strategic importance of Morocco in the southern neighbourhood. The progress made between the EU and Morocco over the last two decades was truly impressive. The Agricultural Agreement and Fisheries Partnership Agreement – the two contentious areas – needed to build on that progress instead of compromising it.

Morocco had an image problem with regard to Western Sahara. It was viewed as the occupier of Western Sahara that was unscrupulously using the natural resources of the invaded territory to the disadvantage of the Saharawi people. For this reason, several Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) had demanded that the EU use the political clout and resources to bring the Agriculture Agreement and the Fisheries Partnership Agreement to an end with Morocco. This movement culminated in a resolution on the “Situation in the Western Sahara,” condemning the actions of the Kingdom of Morocco in the region. This was not the sort of image Morocco wanted to have in the EU.



SAVING THE EU-MOROCCO TALKS

THE MESSAGE

The goal of our lobbying was simple: renewal of the Agricultural Agreement and Fisheries Partnership Agreement to stress that the EU-Morocco cooperation instruments could not be jeopardised by political interests.

Our message was complete with regard to every detail. It made the case to put the process back on track for the approval of the Agricultural Agreement and Fisheries Partnership Agreement. It emphasized the benefits of the two agreements for the actual integration of Morocco into the EU economic and social area. It eliminated any concern about the funds' end receivers by providing factual evidence that the income generated was being used to the advantage of the Saharawi people. And, finally, it stressed Morocco's strategic importance in the region and made the case for finding a long and lasting international solution to the Western Sahara conflict.

STRATEGY

Our strategy made use of several dynamics over the course of the representation. Alber & Geiger compiled and delivered a series of detailed, tailor made messages on specific technical issues regarding the Agricultural Agreement and Fisheries Partnership Agreement. Detailed fisheries, agricultural and environmental arguments were advanced with the relevant European Commission and Council officials, as well as MEPs in the involved Committees, to tackle all the concerns of a technical nature.

The co-ordinated multi-faceted approach also involved an appeal to specific Member States and organisational interests in fishing and agriculture sector. These parties were encouraged to help improve the media image of the agreement.

Alber & Geiger's analytical competence allowed it to create an effective narrative for the agreements legality under public international law. This argument was subsumed into our broader narrative that the agreement would enhance the region's stability in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and benefit the local population.



THE EFFECT

By any measure, the work on behalf of Morocco was a success. Our messages about the benefits of the agreements, the strategic importance of the EU-Morocco relations, and the need to find a lasting solution to the Western Sahara conflict with the international community, reached all the key decision makers. Several MEPs decided to speak out in support of the agreements and stress Morocco's vital role in the region.

Our lobbying with the EU institutions did more than pave the way for the approval of the Agriculture Agreement and the Fisheries Partnership Agreement. Alber & Geiger had to tread lightly and optimise all its knowledge, skills and multi-professional techniques to not only save the talks, but also reinforce Morocco's relations with all the EU institutions, including the European Parliament.

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Valuable EU support and advise.

– H.E. Menouar Alem,
Ambassador to the EU, Kingdom of Morocco

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SAVING THE EU-MOROCCO TALKS

SUCCESS

Alber & Geiger succeeded in assisting Morocco sign a new protocol with the EU. In doing so we met our client's expectations, attracting new champions and ensuring a better understanding of the cooperation instruments and Morocco's role in the region. Members of the European Parliament are now more familiar with the underlying arguments in favour of Morocco and willing to publicly support a cooperation with Morocco that is inclusive, beneficial both financially and socially, environmentally friendly and does not violate international law.

It was our ability to muster and co-ordinate arguments of a scientific, technical, legal, political and moral nature that lead to this positive conclusion. Our ability to understand and co-ordinate different actors at the same time led to ultimate success.

