



*Press Release*

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WESTERN SAHARA RESOURCE WATCH (WSRW)

**“Stop the exploitation of natural resources in occupied Western Sahara”**

The Western Sahara Resource Watch welcomes the fourth round of talks that is due to take place in the US on 16-18 March 2008 between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco regarding the achievement of the decolonisation of Western Sahara.

WSRW urges the Frente POLISARIO, Morocco and the United Nations to include on the agenda of the discussion the issue of natural resources of the territories occupied by Morocco.

“The Moroccan exploitation of the natural resources in Western Sahara contributes to the perpetuation and prolonging of the colonial domination of the territory and the suffering of its population, and impeding the resolution of the conflict”, recalls the International Coordinator of WSRW, Javier García Lachica.

“Therefore”, declares García Lachica, “WSRW calls on all states and economic actors of the international community to abstain from contributing with their investments to maintaining the colonial situation in Western Sahara. Abstaining from carrying out investments in the occupied territory of Western Sahara is the most constructive way to support the ongoing negotiations process.”

In the third round of negotiations, held in January, both parties decided to include on the agenda of the next round the discussion of a key issue in the decolonisation process: the management of the natural resources of Western Sahara.

These resources include above all fish and phosphate. The European Union and the Government of Morocco signed a fisheries agreement that allows European fishermen to fish in the occupied territories. Fertilizer producers, especially the US, Australia and Spain, import phosphate from the same place. Two oil companies—the American Kosmos Energy and the Irish Island Oil & Gas—have hydrocarbon exploration licenses.

In view of the ongoing negotiations, the WSRW requests all the countries and companies involved to stop their investments with a view to supporting the peace process, and urges the United Nations to put in place the necessary mechanisms, in conformity with international legality, that would contribute to protecting the natural resources of the territory pending a lasting solution to the conflict.

The WSRW is an international non-governmental organisation with members from more than 30 countries that defends the respect for international law upholding the decolonisation of Western Sahara and the sovereignty of the Sahrawi people over their natural resources. More on:

[www.wsrw.org](http://www.wsrw.org).

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