

# Morocco is Committed to Resolving the Western Sahara

## The Autonomy Initiative

- On April 11, 2007 Morocco presented its historic initiative for the Western Sahara to the United Nations, “The Moroccan Autonomy Initiative for Negotiating an Autonomy Statute for the Sahara Region.” This initiative came in response to repeated requests of the UN Security Council and several of its key members, including the United States, that Morocco propose a compromise solution to the longstanding Western Sahara conflict that could facilitate the opening of negotiations for a “just, durable, and peaceful” political solution.  
<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S2007206.pdf>
- The initiative was the product of a year-long internal and foreign Moroccan consultation process. All sectors of the local Sahrawi population were included in the consultations and the views of foreign governments and expert international authorities were sought before the plan was finalized for presentation to the United Nations. The plan outlines a political solution tracing the broad scope of an autonomy arrangement for the Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty. It includes a description of areas of local and shared powers for the region with the central government. The initiative does not go into extensive detail on the assumption that specific arrangements should be the result of direct negotiations rather than the imposition by only one party to the dispute.  
<http://moroccanamericanpolicy.com/MoroccanCompromiseSolution041107.pdf>
- The Moroccan initiative is the first and only innovative proposal from one of the parties in response to Security Council encouragement. It offers a political compromise that can satisfy the basic requirements of both parties and respect the key principles of international law for resolving such conflicts. Since 1999, Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama have supported and encouraged such a compromise formula based on autonomy for the Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty, with the details to be negotiated between Morocco, the Polisario Front, and their Algerian backers. It was a policy born of pragmatism that is the only credible option in an increasingly unstable region. Since the plan was unveiled, successive US governments have called the plan “serious and credible.”  
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/03/158895.htm>  
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2012/09/197711.htm>  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/22/joint-statement-united-states-america-and-kingdom-morocco>  
[http://moroccoonthemove.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/mit\\_intlreview\\_us\\_policy\\_wsahara043010.pdf](http://moroccoonthemove.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/mit_intlreview_us_policy_wsahara043010.pdf)
- On the basis of this initiative, the UN Security Council endorsed direct negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front. Four formal rounds and nine informal rounds of negotiations have taken place, but have failed to resolve the Western Sahara conflict.  
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26031&Cr=western&Cr1=sahara&Kw1=polisario&Kw2=&Kw3=>  
<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS20962.pdf>
- The failure of the negotiations led Peter Van Walsum, the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy and the UN mediator for the first four rounds of negotiations, to issue a frank assessment in 2008 calling for compromise and realism in the ongoing negotiations. Mr. Van

Walsum concluded that “an independent Western Sahara is not an attainable goal.” He called the four rounds of talks a failure and urged the Security Council to pursue the only realistic compromise political solution to the conflict: autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS246402+28-Aug-2008+PRN20080828>

- On April 30, 2008, the UN Security Council members unanimously opted for “realism” rather than prolonging the stalemate. The US played a significant role in this sea change, noting in its statement issued after the UN Security Council vote that, “For our part, we agree with (UN Secretary General’s Personal Envoy) Mr. Van Walsum’s assessment that an independent Sahrawi state is not a realistic option for resolving the conflict and that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution. In our view, the focus of future negotiation rounds should therefore be on designing a mutually acceptable autonomy regime that is consistent with the aspirations of the people of the Western Sahara.”

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Western%20Sahara%20SPV5884.pdf>

- At the MINURSO renewal on April 25, 2013 the UN Security Council reaffirmed support for Morocco’s “serious and credible efforts” to peacefully resolve the conflict in Western Sahara, just as it had done in previous resolutions. Member states also stressed the need for greater regional cooperation and confidence building measures.

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2099\(2013\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2099(2013))

- In a Joint Statement issued on November 22, 2013 following a meeting between President Obama and King Mohammed VI, the US reiterated that Morocco’s autonomy plan is “serious, realistic, and credible.” The two leaders also affirmed, “their shared commitment to the improvement of the lives of the people of the Western Sahara and agreed to work together to continue to protect and promote human rights in the territory.”

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/22/joint-statement-united-states-america-and-kingdom-morocco>

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