

## Morocco is Committed to Resolving the Western Sahara

- On April 11, 2007 Morocco presented its historic initiative for the Western Sahara to the United Nations. This initiative comes in response to repeated requests of the UN Security Council and several of its key members, including the United States, that Morocco propose a solution to the longstanding Western Sahara conflict that could facilitate the opening of negotiations for a “just, durable, and peaceful” political solutions. The US State Department has called Morocco’s initiative “a serious and credible proposal to provide real autonomy for the Western Sahara.”  
<http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/apr/82882.htm>
- Morocco’s breakthrough compromise has been widely supported in Washington. Prominent leaders reiterated their support for the Moroccan plan in a 2007 letter signed by 173 Members of the House (including the bipartisan House Leadership, Chairman Lantos and Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen), and in a letter from Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and other important former policy makers.  
[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.com/documents/MACP\\_Press\\_Release\\_060707\\_001.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.com/documents/MACP_Press_Release_060707_001.pdf)  
[http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.com/documents/173\\_sig\\_letter.pdf](http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.com/documents/173_sig_letter.pdf)
- The United States has officially put forth its support for the Moroccan initiative. On July 11, 2007, Ambassador Jackie Sanders, U.S. Alternate Representative to the UN, said, “We believe a promising and realistic way forward on the Western Sahara is meaningful autonomy. Morocco’s initiative could provide a realistic framework to begin negotiations on a plan that would provide for real autonomy contingent on the approval of the local populations. We hope both sides will engage realistically. We note that the Moroccan initiative is flexible, and provides for a referendum in keeping with the principle of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.”  
[http://www.usun-ny.us/press\\_releases/20070711\\_168.html](http://www.usun-ny.us/press_releases/20070711_168.html)
- On the basis of this initiative, the UN Security Council endorsed direct negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front. Four rounds of negotiations have taken place in New York. Both sides have agreed to continue the talks. The fifth round of negotiations has been agreed upon, but a date has not yet been set.  
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26031&Cr=western&Cr1=sahara&Kw1=polisario&Kw2=&Kw3=>
- Peter Van Walsum, the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy and the UN mediator for the first four rounds of negotiations, issued a bold and frank assessment calling for compromise and realism in the on-going 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>

This information has been produced by the Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP). [www.moroccoonthemove.com](http://www.moroccoonthemove.com)

MACP is a registered agent of the Government of Morocco.

Additional information is available at the Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

- 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.”

<http://www.metimes.com/news/article/2008/10/bc-sahara-opinion-crnl/>  
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/325/46/PDF/N0832546.pdf?OpenElement>
- On the eve of the 2009 MINURSO renewal, 233 members of the the United States House of Representatives sent a letter to President Obama reaffirming their support for Morocco’s Autonomy Proposal. The letter called for strong US backing for Morocco’s compromise solution to end the 30-year Western Sahara conflict, which would clear a path for greater regional cooperation to meet growing security and economic challenges.

<http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/CongressionalLetter.pdf>
- At the MINURSO renewal on April 30, 2009, the UN Security Council reaffirmed support for Morocco’s “serious and credible efforts” to peacefully resolve the conflict in Western Sahara. Member states also stressed the need for greater regional cooperation, and confidence-building measures for “making progress on the human dimension of the conflict”

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/320/16/PDF/N0932016.pdf?OpenElement>
- During a trip to Morocco on November 3, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton confirmed US policy on the Western Sahara - that autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only realistic solution for ending the more than 30-year dispute, noting, “it is important for me to reaffirm, here in Morocco, that there has been no change in our policy. It is a plan, as you know, that was started under the Clinton Administration. It was reaffirmed under the Bush Administration and remains the policy of the United States under the Obama Administration.”

<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/11/131354.htm>
- In March 2010, 54 members of the United States Senate affirmed their support for Morocco’s autonomy plan in a letter addressed to Secretary Clinton. Out of concerns for growing instability in North Africa, the letter urged Secretary Clinton to “make the resolution of the Western Sahara stalemate a U.S. foreign policy priority for North Africa,” and called for “more sustained American attention to one of the region’s most pressing political issues.” The letter voiced strong support for the US policy backing a solution to the conflict based on “broad autonomy for Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty” and called the Moroccan compromise autonomy proposal “serious and credible.” The letter noted that it has been the “bipartisan US policy” of three successive Administrations (Clinton, Bush, and Obama) “to support a resolution of this conflict based on this formula.”

<http://www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org/SenateLetter.pdf>
- In a letter to the Group of Friends in late August 2010, Personal Envoy of the Secretary General for Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, stressed the urgency of resolving the issue, stating that, “in the long-term, the status quo is unacceptable.” In appealing for help from the

Group of Friends, Ross also emphasized the dangers of failing to resolve the conflict, noting, “the risk of a drift toward extremism or criminal activities among Sahrawi youth is growing. The danger that a military or paramilitary adventure could escalate into hostilities increases the longer diplomacy fails to produce progress.”

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20100820/wl\\_africa\\_afp/morocccowsaharaspainun](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20100820/wl_africa_afp/morocccowsaharaspainun)

- On March 23, 2011, at a joint press briefing with Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reiterated US policy on the Western Sahara, stating that the Moroccan autonomy plan is, “serious, realistic, and credible [and] a potential approach to satisfy the aspirations of the people in Western Sahara to run their own affairs in peace and dignity.”  
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/03/158895.htm>
- In December 2011, Congress reiterated the urgency of putting tangible actions behind US policy supporting Moroccan autonomy in the Western Sahara by inserting said language in the 2012 Omnibus Spending Report. The language, which states that US program assistance to Morocco may be used in “all regions and territories administered by Morocco,” authorizes the extension of US economic and social development assistance to the Western Sahara as a means of resolving the conflict. It further notes that Congress “remains concerned with resolving the dispute over the Western Sahara” that for decades has been an obstacle to cooperation, stability, and security in the region, and urges the State Department “to prioritize a negotiated settlement” to the dispute based on autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty. Speaking in the Congressional Record, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) underscored the urgency of the matter, noting that “the US must continue to seek a fair, just, and enduring solution to the Western Sahara in order to promote regional integration and protect US security interests in the region.”  
<http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/press-release-congress-president-approve/>
- During a visit to Rabat in February 2012 to meet with new Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad-Eddine Al-Othmani, Secretary Clinton praised Morocco as a leader for peace and democracy in the region and reaffirmed Morocco’s autonomy initiative to resolve the Western Sahara conflict as “serious, realistic, and credible.” Reiterating that US policy has remained constant, Clinton underscored the continuity of US policy on the Western Sahara of supporting a solution based on autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty as supported by three US Administrations – Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Clinton – as well as bipartisan majorities in both House of Congress.  
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/02/184667.htm>
- The urgency of resolving the Western Sahara has rapidly increased in importance due to the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel, including the coup in Mali and subsequent takeover of the northern part of the country by AQIM and MUJAO, supported by jihadists from across the region, including from the Polisario-run camps. These incidents have led Chris Ross to issue another set of warnings about the urgency of resolving the Western Sahara. Following a tour of the region in November 2012, Ross arguing that it, “would be a serious miscalculation (to maintain the status quo), especially since the status quo is now threatened

by the rise of extremist, terrorist, and criminal elements in the Sahel region. This dispute, if left to fester in this new situation, could spark renewed violence or hostilities that would be tragic for the people of Western Sahara and for North Africa as a whole.”

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5htH7sXEM6mE9j-NsimrXas4hWToQ?docId=CNG.714d6206df93e4c0d2493c2c67d87693.311>

- On April 9, 2013 UN leader Ban-Ki Moon underscored these sentiments and called for urgent international efforts to end the Western Sahara conflict because of fears the Mali war will spill over into the territory. In a report to the 15-member Security Council, Ban argued, "The rise of instability and insecurity in and around the Sahel requires an urgent settlement of this long-standing dispute." The report continued, "All governments consulted raised serious concerns over the risk that the fighting in Mali could spill over into neighboring countries and contribute to radicalizing the Western Saharan refugee camps," with one government leader in the region calling the Western Sahara camps "a ticking time bomb," according to the report.

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iOnupKvBuc8I\\_WTR3J5BnNCFmEw?docId=CNG.566cbe22180951c72bc8d9c6ad6fd9d1.d1](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iOnupKvBuc8I_WTR3J5BnNCFmEw?docId=CNG.566cbe22180951c72bc8d9c6ad6fd9d1.d1)

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