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SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second
International Decade for the Eradication of
Colonialism: priorities for action

Yanuca, Fiji
28 to 30 November 2006

STATEMENT BY

MOROCCO

Mr. President,

The question of Western Sahara is not a question of decolonization and it should not be discussed in this seminar as it should not have been included in the agenda of the 4th Committee or its subsidiary body, the Committee of 24.

Western Sahara is part of the Kingdom of Morocco. This region of Morocco has been returned to its mother land, the Kingdom of Morocco, in 1975 by Spain after long negotiations and after the International Court of Justice recognized the existence of legal ties as well as allegiances between the Kingdom of Morocco and that region. The General Assembly took note of the Madrid Agreement that terminated the colonization of Western Sahara by its Resolution 34/58 B of 11 December 1975 and on 26 February 1976; Spain informed the Secretary General that, as of that date, it had terminated its presence in the territory.

Despite all these facts, the dispute over this part of our territory was maintained on the agenda of the above mentioned United Nations bodies. The Security Council was also involved and deployed enormous efforts to find a solution to this artificial dispute created by some countries among them and in particular Algeria. A peacekeeping operation was created for that purpose in 1990.

In this dispute, the responsibility of Algeria suffers no ambiguity for the international observers. It sponsored the creation of Polisario and a pseudo "republic" in 1975. It mobilized huge resources to obtain recognition by some countries of this fictitious entity that does not possess any of the attributes of a sovereign state.

It harbored the Polisario, provided it with the necessary military assistance and has even been involved in direct military confrontation with Morocco in support of the separatists. The responsibility of Algeria is clearly established at the diplomatic, military and humanitarian levels, for more information please refer to doc S/2004/760.

The responsibility of this neighboring country goes beyond creating and maintaining the dispute, it has historical responsibility beside the Polisario in delaying indefinitely the resolution of this dispute. To illustrate this responsibility, I would like to underline some facts:

1- In December 1991, the Security Council adopted Resolution 725 relating to the criteria for eligibility to participate in the referendum. It was rejected by this neighbor and the Polisario. The Secretary General was obliged to dilute these criteria in what was called a compromise, in order to launch the identification of voters. This effort took more than two years (Resolution 907 of March 1994);

2- In September 2000 when Mr. Baker wanted to initiate discussions as called for by Resolution 1309 about a political solution, the same country and the same Polisario refused any discussion.

3- When Mr. Baker submitted in June 2001 a framework agreement (doc S/2001/613), once more Algeria and the Polisario rejected it.

The Secretary General qualified the proposed framework agreement as the "last window of opportunity for years to come" and urged to seize it (par 60).

Faced with this situation, Mr. Baker revised its proposal in a manner that reintroduced the option of independence, which is unacceptable by the Kingdom of Morocco.

Since none of the proposals could be implemented, the Security Council and the Secretary General reoriented their efforts towards pressing the parties to engage in discussions to find a political solution.

The Kingdom of Morocco accepted the call but the two other parties continued to insist on going back to proposals proven impossible to be implemented.

This creates a very difficult situation as it appeared in the last resolution of the General Assembly and the one adopted by the Security Council. The resolution 1720 (2006) of the Security Council calls on the parties and the states of the region to continue to cooperate fully with the United Nations to end the current impasse and to achieve progress towards a political solution.

In its 4th Committee, the Algerian resolution presented and adopted by vote focused on past proposals. It recalls the resolution by which the Security Council adopted the settlement plan. It recalls the 2nd Peace Plan of Mr. Baker while the Security Council has already decided that it cannot be implemented.

The draft resolution underlines the validity of the settlement plan that the United Nations declared inapplicable. Some of its operative paragraphs are contradictory. The support of the settlement plan, the peace plan and the political solution (operative paragraphs 2 and 4 of the resolution) is impossible to implement.

Since the beginning of the dispute, the Kingdom of Morocco made sacrifices and accepted compromises as long as they do not go against its territorial integrity, sovereignty and national unity.

First of all, Morocco is a moderate country and believes in peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiations and discussions. However, it should be clear that there will be no compromises on our territorial integrity, sovereignty and national unity.

Second, Morocco firmly believes in the necessity of the construction of the Maghreb Union. It is the way to the prosperity of the people of the region. In a globalised world, regional integration is inevitable if we want to prevent the adverse effects of such globalization.

Third, Morocco shares with Algeria and the other countries of the Maghreb common values, common interests and common challenges.

Fourth, Morocco believes that a political solution to put an end to this artificial dispute could be found. That's why His Majesty the King announced the decision of Morocco to present a proposal of autonomy of these provinces within the territorial

integrity of Morocco, its sovereignty over all its territory and within the national unity of the Kingdom.

Extensive consultations have been launched with the national political actors such as the CORCAS and the political parties. These consultations which encompass all national political parties as well as representatives of the population, have been initiated in the framework of a democratic, participative, inclusive and transparent approach aimed at ensuring adherence to the autonomy concept. This indeed represents an unprecedented experience in the Maghreb region.

In this context, the Royal Consultative Council for the Sahara Affairs (CORCAS), a representative body composed of all the tribal constituents as well as the various political and socio-economic actors of the region, pledged its full commitment to the process of elaborating this autonomy status.

The proposal will be submitted at the conclusion of this consultative process.

As such, this innovative and responsible compromise proposal, consisting of an autonomy status that is respectful of national sovereignty, constitutes the best solution to resolve this dispute.

In this perspective, the Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its willingness to cooperate with the Secretary General and his personal envoy to arrive at a political solution acceptable to all.

To conclude, I would like to invite the members of the Committee of 24 to reflect seriously about the ongoing situation about this dispute and take it out of the agenda. It is not a question of decolonization. It is an artificial dispute and the Kingdom of Morocco is ready to contribute to the search of a political solution which assures its territorial integrity while giving the population the right to manage their usual business.

The Kingdom of Morocco continues to be concerned with the deterioration of the situation of the sahraouis sequestered in Tindouf, Algeria where they cannot move without the authorization of the military.

We call on the international community in general and the UNHCR in particular to assure their protection including the protection of their right to repatriation under the guarantees of the international law. Morocco has affirmed on many occasions that every effort will be made to ensure their protection and their reinstallation.

We count on the vigilance of humanitarian organizations to prevent any use of humanitarian assistance for military purposes by the so called Polisario as long as the confusion continues to be maintained between civilian and military in the Tindouf camps.

I hope that all this information will help the Committee of 24 review the consideration of Western Sahara and delete it from the agenda.