



Western Sahara Negotiations Resume Amid Polisario Threats of Renewed Violence

Peaceful political compromise is the only solution to Western Sahara dispute

Washington, DC (January 7, 2008) – The third round of negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front over the future of the Western Sahara territory is scheduled to begin today in Manhasset, New York under the auspices of the United Nations, which has coordinated a ceasefire in the region since 1991.

While Morocco has made clear that it is prepared to negotiate in good faith, recent threats to return to war by the Algerian-backed Polisario Front have cast a shadow over the negotiations. According to a recent *Reuters* article, Polisario official Mohamed Beissat said the Polisario is prepared to “pursue peace talks or resume armed struggle to speed up the process.” In a later statement, Beissat asserted, “to win peace, you have to get ready for war. (...) that’s the reality of the human race.”

Recent Al-Qaeda-linked terrorist attacks in Morocco and Algeria further underscore the need to condemn such violent and provocative statements and to achieve a peaceful outcome of the negotiations.

“This is not the first time that the Polisario Front, with Algerian backing, has demonstrated a preference for threats of war over reasonable political compromise,” said Robert Holley, regional expert and executive director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. “However, given the heightened concerns in the US and Western Europe over what appears to be a rapidly expanding and deadly Al Qaeda threat in the Maghreb, the international community should take the Polisario threats seriously and reconsider what measures they should take in the United Nations to persuade the Polisario Front and Algeria that only through peaceful compromise can the Western Sahara issue be resolved.”

In April 2007, Morocco presented an autonomy initiative to the UN in hopes that it would act as a starting point for good faith peace negotiations to resolve the Western Sahara dispute. Washington has encouraged the parties to use Morocco’s proposal as the basis for negotiating a compromise political solution to resolve the conflict, which would bring about greater economic stability, security and increased international cooperation in the region.

###

The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and an interested public in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

For more information, please visit www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org