

FOREWORD

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Since 2009, the International Research Seminar on Autonomy has been an annual event, providing a platform for several renowned experts, academics, and scholars to exchange and reflect on different aspects of autonomy models, in several regions of the world.

The objective of the 2021 edition of the seminar, which was held online on 16 July 2021, was to shed light on an essential aspect of autonomy, namely the devolution of judicial powers. Indeed, autonomous judicial systems based on the principles of law are a *sine qua non* condition for the success of any democracy; therefore, guaranteeing the respect of the principles and rules founding this autonomy.

The 2021 edition of this seminar highlighted the assets of the Moroccan Autonomy Initiative through a comparative approach with other experiences of autonomy worldwide, particularly in Western Europe, Malaysia, Canada and Cameroon.

The Moroccan Autonomy Initiative, presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2007, is adapted to the needs of local governance, taking into account the specificities of the Kingdom's southern provinces. It grants the majority of key powers to the autonomous region, including judicial powers, as stipulated in the provisions of the Autonomy Initiative.

Comparative analysis with Canada's constitutional law, the system of devolution of judicial powers in Cameroon, as well as the judicial system of Malaysia and some of the most decentralized countries in Western Europe, including Switzerland, Germany and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom and Denmark, has shown that the Moroccan Autonomy Initiative for the Sahara region meets the international standards of the most democratic autonomy systems. It establishes the relevant principles of an avant-garde model of judicial autonomy.

Indeed, the Moroccan Autonomy Initiative will enable the establishment of a coherent local judicial system in the Moroccan Sahara region, thus providing its populations with the universal judicial fundamentals necessary to guarantee the respect of the rule of law and to ensure the effective legal protection of the citizens and entities of the region, while preserving its own legal history, culture, and specificities.

As in every edition, this year's Seminar focused on an essential aspect of the materialization of autonomy throughout the world. The comparative study of different autonomy models confirmed that, beyond being a just solution to the Moroccan Sahara dispute and in conformity with international law, the Moroccan Autonomy Initiative offers a pragmatic, participatory, holistic, and viable mode of governance that guarantees fairness and equality for all citizens before the law.