

Presentation of the conclusions of the international seminar of Dakhla,

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Gathered in the city of Dakhla on February 21st and 22nd 2011, within the framework of an international seminar, experts, consultants, political scientists, lawyers, constitutional experts, politicians and historians from various countries debated whether the Moroccan initiative for enlarged autonomy for the Sahara region offers a pragmatic and final solution to the conflict, within the boundaries of international law and whilst respecting human rights. Participants reached the following conclusions:

- 1) The enlarged autonomy initiative for the Sahara put forward by the Government of Morocco in response to the call from the Security Council of the UN to find solutions to end the current impasse in the Sahara is consistent with the law.**
- 2) The said initiative goes beyond the demand for self-determination of the region and offers a practical solution, whilst resolving the problem of decolonization, created by Spain, in a peaceful and negotiated manner.**
- 3) The enlarged autonomy initiative complies with international law and globally accepted legal standards.**
- 4) The solution put forward by Morocco is part of a global democratic movement that extends beyond the building, by Morocco, of a society that guarantees individual and collective freedoms, as well as economic and social development.**
- 5) Enlarged autonomy for the Sahara region will no doubt help foster the region's economic and social development and restore relations with neighbouring countries.**
- 6) In the African context, enlarged autonomy fulfils the right to self-determination of the Saharawi population, whilst avoiding the risks inherent in creating new independent states whose future is uncertain.**
- 7) Likewise, examples of autonomy granted within other states were studied by participants who noticed that each case was different and varied depending on the circumstances. This shows that enlarged autonomy is a practical approach, negotiated between interested parties within the framework of the current initiative.**
- 8) Experts recommend guaranteeing the integrity of the social and political structures offered, whilst avoiding the creation of superficial structures doomed to obsolescence or that could cause problems in the future.**
- 9) The enlarged autonomy initiative guarantees respect for collective and individual human rights, as well as for political, democratic, social and economic rights.**
- 10) Experts unanimously recommend that Morocco publicizes and disseminates the initiative at global level to international and national authorities, as well as to the populations concerned and the media.**

11) Given the courage of the Moroccan Government in presenting such a bold initiative, we consider that the proposal deserves to be heard and analyzed by the international community, all the more since the UN themselves described it as positive, serious and credible.

12) It is important to stress that the enlarged autonomy document explicitly provides for the need to solve exiles and repatriation related issues.

13) The Moroccan initiative is undoubtedly generous in so far as it contains a special plan for enlarged autonomy that goes beyond what is granted to the other regions of Morocco and which will require a reform of the Moroccan Constitution that the Moroccan State is willing to undertake.

14) Likewise, the enlarged autonomy initiative is undeniably practical as it precisely defines the economic, social and cultural rights of the population, as well as the future governing bodies of the region.

15) It is worth underlining that the enlarged autonomy initiative takes into account the need to negotiate each element within it with the parties concerned in order to achieve the required consensus around the initiative.

16) Likewise, participants recognize that autonomous states in general and this one in particular, strengthen political as well as social rights, whilst promoting a better quality of life for their citizens.

17) Experts underline that the right to autonomy in general must be based on solidarity with the human group and the regions that make it up.

18) Likewise, experts argue that the initiative for the negotiation of an enlarged autonomy statute put forward by Morocco is a peaceful and negotiated solution, fruit of dialogue, and that rules out the dangerous approach which considers conflict as the only possible solution.

19) Besides, the Moroccan initiative clearly takes into account the evolution of the regional and global situation, with pragmatism and realism, whilst resolving decolonization related issues.

20) Regarding collective and social rights, the enlarged autonomy initiative safeguards the local and cultural rights of the region.

21) Various experts stress that though different, the enlarged autonomy initiative for the Sahara region is in line with the regional development plan currently under way in Morocco.

22) Likewise, focus is on the fact that this is an original and courageous solution for the African region where autonomy and federalism are virtually nonexistent.

23) Experts insist that from a legal point of view, the enlarged autonomy initiative should not rest on delegation of powers, but on genuine enlarged autonomy and on bodies to guarantee it.

24) Furthermore, participating experts emphasize the need to establish the legal mechanisms that will make it possible in the future to reform the autonomous region of the Sahara should the need arise.

25) With regard to the rights of vulnerable groups, such as women and the young, the Moroccan initiative also focuses on solving the particular problems they are faced with.

26) It should be stressed that the enlarged autonomy initiative concretely and specifically provides for the economic and fiscal autonomy of the region, and gives it exclusive and transferable competences in these areas, based on the principle of subsidiarity.

27) Likewise, it should be stressed that the autonomy initiative is not an isolated political gesture on the part of Morocco but that it is part of the political, legislative and economic dynamic launched by the Kingdom.

28) Through this initiative, Morocco doesn't depart from its past policy but rather continues its search for a real and viable solution to the conflict.

29) As in other countries the enlarged autonomy initiative put forward for the Sahara will contribute to the advanced regionalization process that will undoubtedly benefit the State of Morocco.

30) Likewise, it is well known that the road to enlarged autonomy will be a long one, as has been the case in other countries, and that the initiative put forward will only be a first step along that road.

31) The fact that the enlarged autonomy initiative considers the voluntary integration of ethnic groups is a positive one, integration being provided for at administrative and State level.

32) In today's world, autonomy processes are considered an expression of human rights and have led to a global movement of decentralization. Seen in this light, the Moroccan initiative for enlarged autonomy for the Sahara region is perfectly topical.

33) The experts attending the Seminar insist on the need to try and avoid the adverse effects of future oversight and audit bodies of the proposed enlarged autonomy, which could limit real competences, whilst guaranteeing in the texts the relevant rights mentioned in the initiative.

34) Likewise, experts agree that the holding of the earlier approved referendum is at present difficult, as was seen by those who tried to organize it and to conduct the relevant census.

35) A large number of experts insist that each process of decentralization and autonomy is different and varies from one place or one country to the next as the particularities and circumstances of the region concerned have to be taken into account.

36) Likewise, it is important for the Moroccan Constitution to clearly establish the scope of enlarged autonomy and the degree of autonomy granted in order to avoid future problems of interpretation.

37) For various experts, it is important to clearly and concretely define separation of powers, so that enlarged autonomy is from the onset well conceived and well organized.

38) Participants insist that any autonomy project should be based on a democratic conception of the society it is implemented in.

39) Finally, two problems are highlighted that will have to be solved and properly accounted for: first of all, the problem of asymmetrical autonomy between the Sahara region and the rest of Morocco, an asymmetry which is unavoidable to solve the conflict; and second, the need to avoid establishing two constituent entities in case of autonomy lest they give rise to confusion.