



The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations

## International Research Seminar

### “EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF AUTONOMOUS REGIONS AND TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION”

(United Nations Headquarters in New York, 2 May 2016)

#### Background

On **11 April 2007**, the Kingdom of Morocco presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations a document entitled “Moroccan Initiative for Negotiating an Autonomy Statute for the Sahara Region” in order to break the stalemate in negotiations on the status of Western Sahara.<sup>1</sup> With the aim of promoting discussion on aspects of that proposal, Morocco initiated, among others, a number of international academic seminars:

- One on 6 October 2009 in Geneva with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) which published a summary as one of its *Geneva Papers*;<sup>2</sup>
- Another one on **21-22 February 2011** in Dakhla, Morocco, on “The Democracy and Human Rights Dimensions of the Moroccan Initiative”, whose results were presented to a round-table on 17 March 2011 on the margins of the Human Rights Council in Geneva;
- Other ones in Geneva on: **22 March 2012** on “Governance in the Statutes of Autonomy: Institutions and Mechanisms”; **4 June 2012** on “Managing Natural Resources in Statutes of Autonomy”; **21 March 2013** on “Representation and Legitimacy in Autonomy Negotiations”; **1 July 2013** on “Autonomy Statutes and Regionalization: Solidarity and Equalization between Regions”; and **25 March 2014** on “What Development Models for Autonomous Regions?”;
- And in New York on **30 June 2014** on “Regional Commissions of National Human Rights Councils in Autonomous Regions: Good Practices and Challenges,” and on **1<sup>st</sup> June 2015** on “Civil Society and Non-governmental Organizations in Autonomous Regions : Role and Responsibilities.”

The Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Morocco published the contents of all seminars in separate reports.

#### Aims

The seminar convened on **2 May 2016** will pursue the same objective as the previous ones: promoting the importance of the Moroccan Initiative for a negotiation on the autonomy of the Sahara Region, in the light of the efforts made by Morocco in terms of economic, socio-cultural, environmental and human development of that region. This seminar will offer an opportunity to compare the practice followed in some states and/or already autonomous territories or regions or in view of their future autonomy regarding the relations that those regions or territories are entitled to maintain with other subjects of international law (States, international organisations, other autonomous regions) and, in particular, activities in the area of cooperation or promotion of economic development that they may conduct.

In this context, it should be noted that Article 15 of the Moroccan proposal for the autonomy of the region of Sahara provides that “*State responsibilities with respect to external relations shall be exercised in consultation with the Sahara Autonomous Region for those matters which have a direct bearing on the prerogatives of the Region. The Sahara Autonomous Region may, in consultation with the Government, establish cooperation relations with foreign regions to foster inter-regional dialogue and cooperation.*”

It is also important to note that the international negotiations on the so-called conflict of Western Sahara are being conducted within the United Nations and that this seminar does not aim at substituting these negotiations but at facilitating their success.

<sup>1</sup> See : United Nations, Security Council, Document S/2007/206 of 13 April 2007

([www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S2007206.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/MINURSO%20S2007206.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> M. Finaud. “Can Autonomy Fulfil the Right to Self-determination?”, *GCSP Geneva Paper* No. 12, 2010 ([www.gcsp.ch/content/download/1652/13782/download](http://www.gcsp.ch/content/download/1652/13782/download)).

As for the previous events, the contributions to this 2 May 2016 seminar will be published by Morocco.

## Programme

### 2 May 2016

10.00 – 10.30	<b>M. Marc Finaud</b> , Senior Advisor, Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)	Introduction by the Chair: <i>Main Aspects of the Moroccan Initiative for the Autonomy of the Sahara Region Regarding External Relations</i>
10.30 – 12.00	Presentation of experiences in various regional autonomous regions with respect to external relations and transborder cooperation, and comparison with the Moroccan Initiative on Sahara	
- 10.30 – 11.00	Prof. <b>Jean-Louis Roy</b> , President, Partenariat International (Montreal, Canada)	<i>Canada /Québec</i>
- 11.00 – 11.30	Prof. <b>Rose-Marie Belle Antoine</b> , Dean, Faculty of Law, University of West Indies (St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago)	<i>West Indies / Tobago, Nevis, Barbuda</i>
- 11.30 – 12.00	Mr <b>Thomas Benedikter</b> , Director, South Tyrol Centre for Political Studies and Civic Education (Bolsen, Italy)	<i>Autonomous Regions of Europe</i>
12.00 – 12.30	<b>Mr Marc Finaud</b>	<i>Chair's Concluding Remarks</i>