



Australia Western Sahara Association (AWSA)



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18 March 2007

His Excellency, Ban Ki Moon,
Secretary-General,
United Nations Organisation
New York
NY 10017
USA

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Australian Western Sahara Association (AWSA) to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation and to wish you every success in undertaking that enormously difficult role.

I am also writing because, as you take up your new position, the fundamental right of the Saharawi people to self-determination is seriously at risk.

As you will already be aware, the question of Western Sahara is one of decolonization, in terms of the UN Charter and of Resolutions 1514(XV) of 14 December 1960 and 1541(XV) of 15 December 1960 of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Consequently, the decolonisation of Western Sahara is a direct responsibility of the UN.

For more than 30 years now the UN, through Resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, has repeatedly reaffirmed the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people and has developed various plans in settlement of the conflict, namely:

- the UN's Settlement Plan approved by the Security Council through Resolution 658 of 27 June 1990 and 690 of 29 April 1991,
- the Houston Agreements signed in September 1997 by both conflict parties, and
- the Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara elaborated by James Baker III, at the request of the Security Council and approved by the Council through Resolution 1495 of 31 July 2003.

These resolutions and plans, and the negotiations they reflect clearly show that the settlement of the Western Sahara question cannot be achieved except through a fair and just referendum on self-determination, in which the Saharawi people can express, without any restraint, their choice on their future.

We at AWSA are aware of Morocco's attempt to present a proposal, the details of which have not yet been made public, for "autonomy" for Western Sahara, but as part of Morocco. This no more than a manoeuvre to evade the inalienable right of the Saharawi people to exercise their right to self-determination. It is incompatible with international law and unacceptable diplomatically.

Whatever the international situation may be and however strong the pressure exercised by Morocco and its allies, the right of the Saharawi people to determine their own future through the UN's decolonisation processes remains the adamant rule. It cannot be infringed either by the occupying forces of Morocco, or by the international community waiving its obligations.

AWSA is aware that during April 2007, you will be reporting to the UN Security Council on the progress made in relation to the resolution of question of Western Sahara. We urge you, commencing with that report and through your subsequent actions, to do your utmost so to ensure that:

- the process of decolonization of Western Sahara is completed within the shortest possible timeframe, through the organisation of a referendum on self-determination,
- the Saharawi population in the territories occupied by Morocco is protected and is able to exercise its civil and political rights, and
- the exploitation of the Saharawi natural resources by Morocco is brought to an end.

Yours sincerely

Nick O'Neill
AWSA President