



## **Adopted resolution**

### **Out of the impasse: a resolution for Western Sahara**

1 The Western Sahara conflict is one of the oldest and most neglected conflicts in Europe's neighbourhood. More than 30 years after the start of the war and 17 after the ceasefire that froze military positions in 1991, up to 200,000 refugees remain forgotten in an inhospitable corner of the Algerian desert, two UN special envoys have come and gone and several initiatives have wilted and died in a diplomatic stalemate. Under the ardent sun of the Sahara we have a frozen conflict.

2. Human costs are high on both sides: Saharawis in Algerian refugee camps live in harsh conditions and have been separated from their families for 30 years, suffering exile, isolation and poverty. The Youth, born in the camps, lacks any vision of their future and is slowly losing contact with their cultural identity. Human rights abuses remain a recurrent problem in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara; on the other side, Moroccan soldiers captured by the Polisario suffer poor conditions, including torture and forced labour, sometimes since the ceasefire in the early nineties.

3. Political and economic costs are also very high for the region as a whole: the confrontation between Algeria and Morocco hinders the development of the Arab Maghreb Union, delays economic integration and denies the EU of a political counterpart in Northern Africa. The political uncertainty and the policy of a closed border between these two countries slow economic growth and deter foreign investment, increasing migration towards European countries and reducing market opportunities for European products. The lack of an agreed legal framework fuels the exploitation of natural resources in the territory of Western Sahara, including the fisheries exploited by member states under dubious agreements with Morocco.

4. The lack of security coordination between Algeria and Morocco provides opportunities for trafficking of all kinds in the grey area between Western Sahara, Northern Mauritania and South West Algeria: drugs, people and other categories of smugglers cross their paths with the armed movements of the Maghrebi branch of al-Qaeda, offering them points of entry into Algeria, the Maghreb and North-West Africa, including Sahel countries.

5. The EU should adopt an assertive strategy to solve these frozen conflicts in its vicinity, using all the humanitarian and diplomatic means available in the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the creation of a European Peace Corps. Without a strong commitment to the resolution of conflicts such as the Western Sahara, Europe will never assert its position as a global player in the new reality of the XXI Century and, without it; we will remain dependent on other countries' initiatives for our security.

6. The EU has the clout and the resources to bring the Western Sahara conflict out of the impasse and put an end to the human suffering and the continuous violation of the social, political and economic rights of the Saharawis while, at the same time, avoiding the dangerous economic and security implications of this diplomatic stalemate. The EU should encourage and support direct negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario to reach an agreement, offering to host a new round of negotiations in European territory, if necessary. The framework of the negotiation should be that set in the Baker Plan II, with an eventual referendum, which was agreed with both part but is being currently violated by Morocco.

At the same time, the EU should ensure that Algeria and Morocco open their common border and advance towards the economic and security integration of the Maghreb. The EU should recognise, in the framework of the EU-Morocco fisheries agreements, that the territorial waters of the Western Sahara do not belong to Morocco, and therefore the economic arrangements on fisheries in the area should benefit the Saharawi people.