



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



15 November 2010 No. 1

WESTERN SAHARA

Expected Council Action

On 16 November the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, is expected to brief Council members in consultations after an informal meeting between Morocco and the Polisario—facilitated by Ross in Manhasset, NY from 7 to 9 November. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is also expected to brief on the situation in Western Sahara, focusing on the outbreak of violence at a Sahrawi protest camp located near the Western Saharan city of Laayoune.

A press statement expressing concern over the violence is a possibility. However, at press time there were no elements on the table for discussion.

The mandate of MINURSO, the peacekeeping operation in Western Sahara, expires on 30 April 2011.

Key Recent Developments

The informal talks between Morocco and Polisario began on 7 November amid reports of violent clashes between Moroccan security forces and Western Saharan protestors. Moroccan forces reportedly led a pre-dawn raid with water cannons to break up the camp housing more than 12,000 people outside Laayoune. There have been conflicting casualty reports with media sources citing between 11 and twenty killed, including a Spanish national. The Polisario claimed more than 700 wounded with another 159 missing. Morocco stated 12 dead, including ten of their own security forces.

While violence did not derail the informal talks, some Council members were concerned about the situation and were considering convening a Council meeting to address this issue. On 9 November, at Mexico's request, Council members met informally and reportedly decided that any Council response should avoid affecting the ongoing informal meeting facilitated by Ross. One possible course of action explored was for the president of the Security Council to seek the views of Ross. The other was to invite DPKO to brief on the situation as media reports and claims by both Morocco and the Polisario were conflicting.

On 9 November, at the end of the informal meeting, Ross issued a communiqué. It noted that both Morocco and the Polisario had “engaged in broad and frank discussions” of each others' proposals in an “atmosphere of mutual respect.” However, no substantive progress was made as each party continues to “reject” the other's proposal as a basis for future negotiations. The communiqué indicated that for the first time Morocco, Polisario and the two neighbouring countries—Algeria and Mauritania—jointly discussed the confidence-building measures set by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). All parties agreed to resume family visits by

air “without delay” in accordance to the agreed Plan of Action of 2004 and further agreed to “accelerate” the inauguration of family visits by road. The parties also agreed to meet in the near future with UNHRC in Geneva to review implementation. As for the negotiations, the parties are planning to meet again in December.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members and the parties seem comfortable with the recent efforts of Ross to establish new confidence-building measures.

Some Council members are concerned in particular with the conflicting reports of violence resulting from the Moroccan crackdown of the camp outside Laayoune. This has led to the request for DPKO to brief the Council in consultations to give members a clearer sense of the situation.

Selected UN Documents

Security Council Resolutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S/RES/1920 (30 April 2010) called on the parties to continue dialogue and negotiations through UN-sponsored talks. • S/RES/1813 (30 April 2008) endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation that realism and a spirit of compromise are essential for the negotiations to move forward, called upon the parties to continue negotiations without preconditions and in good faith and extended MINURSO's mandate for 12 months. • S/RES/690 (29 April 1991) established MINURSO.
Secretary-General's Latest Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S/2010/175 (6 April 2010)
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communiqué (9 November 2010) was issued by Ross with the agreement of the parties after the third informal round of talks. • S/2009/19 (6 January 2009) was the letter from the Secretary-General to the Council expressing his intention to appoint Christopher Ross as his new personal envoy for Western Sahara. • S/2008/348 (27 May 2008) was a letter from Morocco protesting political demonstrations held by the Polisario Front, as well as the presence of troops in the Tifariti zone east of the berm separating areas under Moroccan and Polisario control.

Other Relevant Facts

Special Representative of the Secretary-General
Hany Abdel-Aziz (Egypt)
Secretary-General's Personal Envoy
Christopher Ross (USA)
MINURSO Force Commander
Major General Zhao Jingmin (China)
Size and Composition of Mission
<i>Authorised strength:</i> 231 military personnel and six police officers
<i>Strength (as of 30 August 2010):</i> 215 total uniformed personnel, including twenty troops, six police officers and 189 military observers; supported by 99 international civilian personnel, 161 local civilian staff and twenty UN volunteers
Cost
1 July 2010-30 June 2011: \$60 million (A/C.5/64/19)

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