WESTERN SAHARA: AFRICA'S LAST COLONY

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Members of the World Affairs Council, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to have been invited here to speak about Western Sahara. To prepare for my visit here, I saw the movie *Into The Wild.* I was expecting my accommodations here to be a used school bus. I was pleasantly surprised by a delightful hotel.

By definition, your Council has a healthy curiosity about what is happening all over the world. I am so glad your attention is now focused on North Africa, Morocco and how the United Nations performed and is performing in resolving Morocco's invasion and retention of what is the world's last colony: Western Sahara. I am going to speak briefly about the history of the conflict over Western Sahara, my role in the initial and failed referendum and then the prospects here and now, in 2007, for resolving the conflict. I intend to leave plenty of time for your questions. I always find the audience's questions to be the most interesting part of any presentation.

THE PLACE:

Western Sahara is country about the size of Colorado, just below Morocco, located just where the name says it should be, on the western edge of the Sahara. I am going to start in the middle of things as good

movies do, with the 1995 congressional hearing into how the U.N. spends the money we appropriate for it. That led to the U.N.'s handling of the referendum scheduled for Western Sahara. Finally, I will move to 2007 and what's happening now to resolve the issue.

In January 1995 I was a witness in that congressional hearing looking into U.N. spending of U.S. taxpayer money. Chuck Lichenstein, a former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. and deputy to Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, despite, or perhaps because of his proximity to the institution, he was not a great fan of the U.N. You may recall his well-publicized remarks in 1983: "If, in the judicious determination of the members of the United Nations they feel they are not welcome and treated with the hostly consideration that is their due, the United States strongly encourages member states to seriously consider removing themselves and this organization from the soil of the United States. We will put no impediment in your way, and we will be at the dockside bidding you a farewell as you set off into the sunset."

It was Chuck who viewed the U.N.'s actions in Western Sahara as so outrageous, even by U.N. standards, that he gave up his place so that I could address the congressional committee that day.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND:

Western Sahara had been a Spanish colony called Spanish Sahara. Under U.N. pressure to decolonize, Spain agreed to withdraw from Spanish Sahara but not before it organized a referendum to allow the inhabitants of Spanish Sahara to vote on their own, decolonized, future. Even before Spain withdrew, Morocco had appeared before the World Court in The Hague and claimed sovereignty over Spanish Sahara. The World Court rejected Morocco's position and in its opinion made two very important points: First, that Morocco had no claim to sovereignty over Spanish, now Western, Sahara, and secondly, that the referendum organized by Spain should go forward. The day after that decision was announced, Morocco invaded Western Sahara in what was called "the Green March." Morocco has occupied Western Sahara ever since, leading to what has become the longest, most protracted conflict in the history of the United Nations.

To put this in context, Representative Jose Serrano recently proposed legislation, to let the people of Puerto Rico decide by referendum whether to remain part of the United States or become an independent state. I am taking the license of over-simplifying the Serrano proposal to make a point, but imagine if the proposal were enacted into law, and the Supreme Court said such a referendum must

be held, but the U.S. Government ignored that decision and sent in troops to take control of the island as U.S. property and postpone the referendum indefinitely. Admittedly, this is like something out of Rod Serling, but it does give a feel for what has been going on between Morocco and Western Sahara.

The indigenous people of Western Sahara, nomads known as Saharawis, through their military arm, the POLISARIO Front, resisted the Moroccan colonizers just as they had resisted the Spanish colonizers before them. Morocco eventually over-powered the POLISARIO but not before the POLISARIO, although vastly out-gunned and out-manned, gave the Moroccans a bloody nose. The Saharawis then created their government-in-exile in Algeria.

In 1991, the U.N. Settlement Plan for Western Sahara provided for a cease-fire as well as for a U.N. supervised referendum on self-determination that would let the Saharawis in Western Sahara decide whether to be integrated into Morocco or become an independent state. If ever there were a job ready-made for the U.N., this surely was it. The referendum was scheduled for 1992 but was postponed until 1994. That's where I came in.

THE REFERENDUM:

The U.N. hired me to run the referendum in Western Sahara. It was the principal activity of a U.N. peacekeeping mission called MINURSO. I thought the U.N. was serious. Maybe some in the U.N. were at the time, but the referendum was, and continues to be, one of those colossal and tremendously expensive flops that make the U.N. ridiculous in the eyes of so many.

The U.N.'s task was simple enough: Hold a referendum with basically one issue to be decided: independence or integration with Morocco. Or so the story was. In the event, however, it wasn't quite so simple. The U.N. turned over control of the referendum to Morocco. There really is no other way of describing what happened. Morocco dictated the where and when of the voting registration, controlled entry to the U.N. registration facilities, and even decided which Western Saharans got to register.

The Moroccan observers at the voter registration sessions had observed quite accurately that the people of Western Sahara wanted independence, not integration with Morocco. The way for Morocco to deal with that unpleasant reality was to postpone the referendum indefinitely until it appeared unworkable, leaving Morocco just where it was, controlling Western Sahara. And that's just what Morocco did.

Towards the end of my year in Western Sahara, I was instructed to make my reports jointly to the U.N. Secretary General's representative and the Moroccan representative. There was no longer even the pretense of an independent U.N. mission in Western Sahara.

What I described to the Congress about the U.N.'s scandalous performance in Western Sahara was not some personal insight. Morocco's abuse of the people of Western Sahara and the U.N. mission's impotence to stop that abuse was open and notorious. The U.N. mission was a laughing stock at diplomatic cocktail parties in Rabat. The mission's abandonment of a free and fair referendum was common knowledge to all the peacekeeping soldiers assigned to the mission as well as to the U.N. staff. That is the reason Chris Hedges of The New York Times had no trouble getting the facts he needed to expose the referendum for the sham it was in his reporting for his paper.

One is justified, I think, in being cynical in the face of the U.N.'s high falutin' language and do-nothing results, but when it was announced in 1997 that former Secretary of State Baker was undertaking to get this referendum back on track, many people, myself

included, were impressed. More than impressed. I was hopeful for the first time in a very long time. I attended the Capitol Hill conference he held, and I eagerly read the reports of his meetings in Morocco, Algeria, Lisbon and London. He would resolve the impasse or, as he said, he would at least identify who was holding up the referendum. He was the great hope for a peaceful settlement.

Sadly, Secretary Baker not only failed to get the referendum back on track, he failed to identify who was holding up the referendum, not that there was any doubt about it. He proposed a five-year period of so-called autonomous rule by the Western Saharans, under the benevolent eye of the Moroccans, of course, to be followed by a referendum. It seemed an absurd proposal. If after almost so many years and so many millions spent, the U.N. was unable to hold a simple referendum, what kind of quixotic reasoning could justify putting one's faith in some other referendum five years hence, during which time the Moroccans would continue to send thousands of Moroccans into Western Sahara as homesteaders ? The Baker proposal was so clearly in Morocco's favor that no one expected the Saharawis to accept it. But amazingly they did, in a gesture of conciliation. The Moroccans, for whom the proposal was a leontine pact, rejected it. Go figure.

Horace, the Roman poet, wrote of the discrepancy between great expectations and meager results: "The mountains are in labor, and a mouse is brought forth." We expected a great diplomatic coup from Secretary Baker's intervention but, sadly, he had presented us with a diplomatic mouse.

It is appropriate that we talk about these things now because the world has just recognized, we can hardly say celebrate, the 32nd anniversary of Morocco's invasion of Western Sahara. We can't say celebrate unless we also celebrate Indonesia's, murderous grab of East Timor which Morocco's invasion most resembles.

One other point worth noting is the great waste of money in the referendum, estimated at $100,000 a day as far back as 1995. That was then a scandalous amount. These days, after the Volcker Report on the U.N. Oil for Food Scandal, it is chicken feed. But there are some similarities.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, whose son prospered through the Oil for Food Scandal, was head of U.N. peacekeeping, and therefore of Minurso when the referendum began. He exhibited there the same dereliction of management duty in MINURSO as would later be documented in the Volcker Report.

What I had observed in MINURSO and testified to before our Congress was later verified by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, various journalists, including The New York Times, The Economist, and on and on.

U.N. BAD FAITH:

Worse than the extravagant waste of money on this mission over the years in the U.N.'s duplicity in managing it: the U.N. sold out the nobodies, the Saharawis for whose right to self-determination the referendum was to be held, to keep favor with a somebody, King Hassan II of Morocco, who invaded Western Sahara 32 years ago, lost his claim to the territory in the World Court, and convinced his old chum and fellow North African, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to provide a U.N. fig leaf to cover Morocco's naked aggression and occupation of Western Sahara. And this is an important point. To hear the Moroccans tell it themselves or through their million dollar Washington lobbyists, the World Court ruled in Morocco's favor back in 1975. As noted earlier, the Court did no such thing, and I invite all of you to read the decision.

WHAT WENT WRONG IN THE REFERENDUM:

Morocco's well-paid lobbyists emphasize what a great ally of the United States Morocco is. Well, that's true. Morocco is not evil incarnate. The point is, however, that however helpful Morocco offers to us in carrying out

diplomatic missions elsewhere, particularly in the Middle East, that same ally Morocco acted more like the Mafia in Western Sahara. For example:

Arabic speakers working for the U.N. came to me to report that Sahrawis coming in to register as voters were complaining to them (in Hassania, the local Arabic dialect) that members of their families and friends had filled out applications at the Moroccan-run centers but never appeared on the voters list. The Moroccans had disenfranchised them. Others complained that relatives and friends were on the list to register as voters, but the Moroccans refused to let them enter the U.N. offices to do so. The Moroccan police kept away everyone who wasn't approved by the Moroccan authorities. People coming to register on a given day couldn't just walk in. Only those with the Moroccan seal of approval could enter. In this way, the Moroccans controlled who registered. Welcome to the Moroccan-run police state of Western Sahara. That's just not the way it's supposed to be, of course, and that's not the kind of the process the U.N. is supposed to be funding.

For this same reason we could not invite Sahrawis to fill out voter application at our centers. Nobody was allowed anywhere the Moroccan Government doesn't want him or her to be. It cannot be stressed too strongly, Western Sahara, under Moroccan control, is a police state, something we as Americans are not used to.

One other observation: Some Sahrawis who reported what the Moroccans were doing to them asked that our U.N. people keep an eye out for them after they left, in case they disappeared. Many said they were scared for their lives if the Moroccans saw them talking to U.N. people. Others asked not to be recognized outside the U.N. center. Terrorized is not too strong a word. Their comments reminded me of nothing so much as South Africa in the early 70's when blacks would talk to you freely in the safety of the U.S. embassy in Cape Town or Pretoria, and then pretend they didn't know you as soon as they left, lest they be observed by the South African Special Branch talking to "trouble-makers."

Morocco didn't and still doesn't want the referendum because the risks outweigh any possible gains. From Morocco's point of view, the status quo is not so bad. On the other hand, for P.R. reasons, Morocco cannot afford to appear to be the villain of the piece and continues to find ways to delay any referendum until everyone is sick of it. This is a long-standing practice that sometimes is simply absurd. On one occasion, like something out of Ionesco, Morocco halted the identification process for over a week, at a cost, once again, of $100,000 per day, on the question of the whether an adverb used in a schedule proposed by MINURSO was le mot juste. This resulted in an exchange of formal letters and a good deal of non-sensical quibbling. If

Morocco had been interested in clarifying the matter, as opposed to simply delaying the process, it could have been done so in two minutes in a phone call to the French-speaking former Togolese ambassador, who drafted the letter.

In the same month, the Moroccan liaison officer with MINURSO, Mohammed Azmi, bragged publicly to a group of MINURSO people in a bar that he alone was the one to decide whether identification would go forward the next day, and to prove his point, he picked up the phone (it was then about midnight) and, in front of everyone, cancelled the next week's identification sessions.

These are the actions of Machiavellians who do what they please with impunity from U.N. sanctions and without a care for the integrity of the referendum or the waste they are incurring.

The identification process was supposed to begin on June 15, 1994, but the start was delayed two-and-a-half months, at a cost of millions of dollars, while the U.N., the Saharawis and Morocco engaged in more time-wasting, this time negotiating over what to call the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) representatives who were to come to observe the identification. The Moroccans had walked out of the O.A.U. years before because it recognized the Sahrawi Arabic Democratic Republic (R.A.S.D.), the diplomatic name for the Saharawu homeland, and now Morocco said they didn't want O.A.U.

people involved in the referendum. The O.A.U. representatives were part of the referendum process and had to be there. In the end a compromise about what they were to be called was reached, and they were permitted to enter. The absurdity was that this had all been worked out in 1993 so there was no need, except delay for the sake of delay, to reinvent the wheel once the referendum was beginning.

THUGGERY:

Each person who registered to vote got a receipt, and when the list of those eligible to vote was made public, the persons on that list were supposed to turn those receipts in for a voter's card. What was happening in Laayoune, the capital of Western Sahara, is that Sahrawis returning from the voter registration centers were being forced to turn in their receipts to the Moroccans. This allowed the wrong people to present receipts and get voter cards. In Chicago they call that voter fraud.

The voter registration process began in earnest on August 28, 1994, simultaneously in Western Sahara and in Algeria, the location of the Saharawis' government-in-exile. One can say that surely, as of this date, MINURSO ceased to be a U.N.-run operation and became the instrument for Morocco's domination of the identification process.

You need government permission to buy space on Moroccan media, and Morocco had always denied MINURSO permission to buy space in the Moroccan newspapers or radio to alert people to register to vote. (Freedom of the press is also a casualty in a police state.) That was small potatoes compared to what was to come after August 28. Former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan referred to the technique the Borgia brothers would use to take over a Northern Italian town. Watching the Moroccans at work, I thought of his description.

<u>SOME FOR INSTANCES</u>:

On August 27, the evening before the process began in Laayoune, the Moroccan Liaison with MINURSO upbraided the MINURSO Chief-of-Mission, a Mr. Eric Jensen, in a public dining room before Moroccans and MINURSO staff, and directed him to remove all U.N. flags from the U.N. building where the voter registration was to take place, or he would close down the voter registration. Unfortunately, John Wayne the Chief-of-Mission was not, and even the U.N. flag in the room where the opening ceremony was to take place was removed.

During the days of the opening sessions in Laayoune, so-called Moroccan journalists photographed and videotaped every minute of every day and took the picture of each Sahrawi who came to be identified. These so-

called journalists were, as our press people and the German head of U.N. police observers verified, Moroccan state security people. Not one second of these hours of so-called television footage ever appeared on Moroccan television.

A few weeks later, telephone taps were found on local and all international lines at MINURSO headquarters. The taps went to a local Moroccan line. This was hushed up. There was no investigation, but the U.N. employee who installed the taps was secreted away to avoid any evidence implicating the U.N.

Mail had regularly been tampered with, and rooms of MINURSO personnel were regularly searched, but this was a new wrinkle. Big Brother was now listening to, as well as watching, us.

In the following weeks, Morocco, not the U.N., dictated even our work and flight schedules. When the Moroccan observers chose to be in Western Sahara, the U.N. worked. The Moroccans also insisted that U.N. planes fly empty, and at great expense, from Laayoune where the planes are based, across the desert to the Saharawi camps in Algeria to shuttle Moroccan observers back home and, of course, to demonstrate their control of the process.

In Laayoune, the Moroccans treated the U.N. identification facilities as their own, running in groups of visiting firemen whenever they liked and keeping the facilities open, if that's what it took, to accommodate late arrivals. On one occasion, when the Moroccan liaison with MINURSO arrived at the identification center, he was furious to find he had to wait a few moments for the gate to be unlocked so he could enter what he called "chez moi," my place. And that is how the Moroccans were permitted, through U.N. timidity, to think of the U.N. facilities in Laayoune, not as an extra-territorial U.N. compound, but as their own property.

In summary, during my time in Western Sahara, Morocco conducted, without a raised eyebrow from Boutros-Ghali's handpicked representative, a campaign of terror against the Saharan people. As noted earlier, I had not seen the likes of it since I observed the apartheid government in South Africa in action against blacks when I visited there with Roy Wilkins, then head of the N.A.A.C.P. in the early 70's. Morocco did not simply influence the referendum -- they controlled it – down to what days the mission worked. Morocco tapped U.N. phones, intercepted U.N. mail, and searched the living quarters of U.N. staff with impunity. More importantly, the Moroccan authorities disenfranchised Saharan voters right and left and substituted Moroccan ringers in their place.

Outsiders like me, as well as U.N. contract employees and veteran U.N. professionals, reported these outrages directly to Boutros-Ghali's representative in MINURSO, but we might just as well not have bothered. Boutros Ghali's man blew them off. He simply lacked the gravitas, or the moxie, to take on the King's gangster-in-chief in Western Sahara, Mohammed Azmi, a charming and ruthless flic, like Captain Segura, Batista's police chief in Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana.*

Before leaving the mission for good at the end of my year there, I sent a note to Kofi Annan outlining the fraud, waste and abuse I had observed in MINURSO, and I offered to discuss it with him in New York on my return. His reply was that what I had told him was "not serious" (his words.) Once I had testified before our congress, my written testimony was picked up by the wire services and went all over the world. It was, for example, the cover story in the very popular journal *Jeune Afrique.* Once the media picked up the story, the Secretary General was, like Captain Renault in *Casablanca*, "shocked, shocked" to hear such things were going on in MINURSO and put his brand new inspector general on the case.

His inspection was a whitewash of the mission, as expected, but it was laughable, literally. John Bolton said at the time that had such a report been

made by a federal inspector general, he would have been laughed out of town before the ink on his signature was dry.

For example, U.S. Army Colonel Dan Magee, who commanded U.S. troops in MINURSO, had complained that a senior mission official regularly demeaned his troops as "a bunch of thieves." Magee thought the U.N. Inspector General would be interested to hear about that kind of anti-American attitude. Magee was wrong. The Inspector General opined that since the official disparaged other nationalities as well, and was, therefore an equal-opportunity bigot, the Inspector General wasn't interested. Incredible. But, as Casey Stengle used to say, "You could look it up." Another MINURSO staffer, a Lebanese-American named Mara Hanna, was terribly upset by what she observed in the mission. She was told by the Inspector General's man: "If you answer my questions truthfully, you'll never work for the U.N. again." She did answer truthfully, and as she declared in the Rayburn House Office Building, she has been barred by the U.N. ever since.

The Security Council, under the leadership of Argentinean Ambassador, Emilio Cardenas, rejected the Inspector General's Inspector Clouseau-like report within days of its appearance. According to The Washington Post, Ambassador Cardenas characterized the inspection report as "tall tales coming out of MINURSO."

The reason the original inspection report was done so poorly was because, as the Inspector General himself later acknowledged, he really wasn't allowed, under U.N. rules, to do a lot of inspecting. He was prohibited, for example, from looking into the possibility that Morocco was behaving badly in the referendum. Morocco, you see, is a member of the U.N., and the U.N. Inspector General is not allowed to risk embarrassing a member state by acknowledging its behavior during the U.N. referendum. It was rather as if a special prosecutor in our country, in carrying out his investigation, were prohibited from investigating possible felonies by someone who holds a high post in the federal government because it might offend the person or the office being investigated. Absurd, but welcome to the U.N.

Human Rights Watch based in New York published its 38-page Report on MINURSO, and it is devastating, documenting blatant human rights violations and vote fraud carried out by Morocco right under the figurative nose of the mission. The mission and U.N., as expected, had no answer.

Perhaps the best example of business-as-usual at the U.N. was being invited, and then uninvited, to address the 4th Committee of the U.N. General Assembly. That's the committee on COLONIALISM! The Committee follows Western Sahara because it is the world's last colony. I have the honor to say Boutros-Ghali, the man himself, personally intervened to see to it that the 4th

Committee did not hear what I had to say about MINURSO. I was, I am told, the first person ever barred from speaking before that committee in the U.N.'s 60-year history. The Secretary General prevented the 4th Committee, composed entirely of member states of the U.N., from hearing someone who just might have been able to tell them why whey were wasting a billion dollars on a mission and referendum going nowhere.

One nice final touch about the U.N., one quarter of whose expenses you and I and all of us U.S. taxpayers pay: When former U.S. Attorney General Dick Thornburgh was serving as Undersecretary for Management at the U.N., he submitted to Boutros-Ghali a report for streamlining the U.N., eliminating waste and fraud and saving hundreds of millions of dollars. Boutros-Ghali, as Thornburgh has stated publicly, had the report suppressed and the remaining copies shredded. (Fortunately, Dick kept copies.)

But I don't want to leave on a misconception. Yes, I have been under-whelmed by the U.N., but despite all I have said here today, I am not anti-Morocco. Outside Western Sahara they may be our good ally. They even claim (erroneously) they were our first ally against the British. My problem with them is that in Western Sahara they have invaded as illegally as Indonesia did in East Timor, and once there Morocco has behaved, without

any serious sanctions from our State Department, like gangsters, like the Mafia.

It is sad for me as an American to see in those countries where I have served, in Equatorial Guinea and Western Sahara, that our government supports the thugs who run those places and ignores the good people who live there and want and deserve better. The United States has kowtowed to Teodoro Obiang Mbasago of Equatorial Guinea. He is the brutal thief of his country's patrimony and torturer of his own people, and quite literally a world-ranked dictator (He was # 9 at last reckoning), because he has oil to sell. Similarly, we have not confronted Morocco's machtpolitik because Morocco is helpful in other areas. That explains why the otherwise insipid statement of David Welch, the State Department's Secretary for the Near East, in June of this year, endorsed Morocco's autonomy plan. Just following orders as someone once said. The late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in his memoir as U.S. ambassador to the U.N. was more forthcoming. He acknowledged his job was to see that Western Sahara did not become an independent state, a charge, he said, he carried out very well. But that was during the Cold War, when Western Sahara had the wrong friends, and Henry Kissinger did not want another Angola on the west coast of Africa. That is no longer the case.

I had great expectations when we had John Bolton at the U.N. He knew where the bodies were buried, and he is a no-nonsense lawyer who worked on the Baker Plan with Secretary Baker. If there were ever a reason to hope for real reform in the U.N. and for a just settlement for Western Sahara, John Bolton personified that hope. But unfortunately, John Bolton did not make policy. He carried it out like any honorable presidential appointee, and that policy tilted heavily in Morocco's favor.

2007: THE PROSPECTS FOR A SOLUTION TO THE STALEMATE:

In mid-August, 2007, shortly before representatives of the Saharawi people and Morocco met on Long Island to discuss for the umpteenth time the future of Western Sahara, on this occasion the latest Moroccan autonomy plan, twenty-four members of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to President Bush. The letter urged the president "to take steps to ensure that your administration demonstrates respect for the rights of the Saharawi people to democratically choose their own political and economic future." That statement goes to the very heart of the conflict in Western Sahara. The conflict is not really about an autonomy plan, the latest in a long line of illusions that Morocco has created over the years to distract world attention from the real issue: Morocco's brazen land grab of Western Sahara, a land grab that stole from the people of Western Sahara, not only their homeland but also any say in their own future. Morocco's crime was contemporaneous with and as flagrant a crime as Indonesia's seizure of East Timor. It was part of what the British journal The Economist called a double Anschluss.

Facts are stubborn things, and despite Morocco's efforts to hide them, they won't go away. We have already mentioned the World Court's opinion in the matter, a decision unfavorable to Morocco, and predictably Morocco ignored it and invaded. Despite dozens of U.N. Security Council resolutions since 1975 reaffirming the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination, and despite the U.N.'s Committee on decolonization treating Western Sahara as a Moroccan colony, Morocco continues to put itself above the law and

remains firmly in place, and in charge, in Western Sahara, Africa's last colony. Anglo Saxon lawyers have an expression, *res ipsa loquitur*, the thing speaks for itself, that means in certain crystal clear situations, a simple recitation of the facts is sufficient, without more, to presume culpability. That is the case in Western Sahara.

The Moroccans now propose a limited autonomy plan for Western Sahara, under Moroccan supervision, of course. The Moroccan limited autonomy plan for Western Sahara might sound like a step forward, at least until you read the not-so-fine print. Article 6 of the plan provides that Morocco will keep its powers in the royal domain, especially with regard to defense, external relations and the constitutional and religious prerogatives of his majesty the king. In other words, the Moroccans are offering autonomy, except in everything that counts.

It gets even more disingenuous. The Moroccans say their plan will be submitted to a referendum, but a referendum to be voted on by whom? By the Moroccan people? That would be absurd on the face of it. By the Saharawis themselves? If so, what happens if the Saharawis reject the plan? Will that mean Saharawi independence? You can be sure the Moroccans would never tolerate that result. The only referendum worth considering is one the Saharawis can endorse, that is, where all the options are on the table. That's not in the cards. Anything less is a sham.

The history of the conflict is downright discouraging to anyone who believes in the rule of law. Voltaire, who had little faith in an international legal system, said in so many words after reviewing Vattel's Droit des Gens: "An international law for nations? Next they'll be talking about a code of conduct for highway robbers and gangsters!" And things have not changed all that much in our day. Morocco has behaved unconscionably since its invasion of Western Sahara because it has tremendous internal political pressures to do just that. Those same domestic political pressures require spending billions of dollars since this conflict began to eliminate the possibility of an independent state to their south.

To recoup the extraordinary costs of their aggression, Morocco attempted, among other things, to exploit whatever oil resources exist off the coast of Western Sahara until, in 2002, the U.N. legal advisor, Hans Corell, stepped in to say that "…the exploration and plundering of the marine and

other natural resources of colonial and non-self governing territories by foreign economic interests, in violation of the relevant resolutions of the of the United Nations, is a threat to the integrity and prosperity of these territories." Translated from legalese, Morocco, as an occupying power but not the Administering power, must stop plundering the natural resources of Western Sahara.

Nothing deterred by this chastisement, Morocco recently entered into the European Union-Moroccan Fisheries Agreement whereby the EU pays Morocco an enormous amount of money to permit 119 EU member vessels to fish Morocco's Atlantic waters, including those off Western Sahara. Here, for once, Morocco is not acting alone in the theft of Western Sahara's natural resources; it is part of a conspiracy with the EU. This is business as usual for Morocco, but unfathomable for the EU that has to know its action flies in the face of the Corell declaration of the inviolability of Western Sahara's natural resources.

Western Sahara is currently recognized by 70 countries, although Morocco has been attempting by strong arm tactics to intimidate some of the smaller countries to withdraw their recognition. Western Sahara is also a full member of the African Union, the successor to the Organization of African Unity. These facts alone would seem to demand forbearance by the EU, but such was not the case.

Despite all the diplomatic bloviating at the U.N. and Washington and elsewhere about the rights of people everywhere to self-determination, the countries that could make a difference in Western Sahara are willing to jettison the rights of one small nation to determine its future to placate Morocco and its outrageous irredentist demands. When the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia 70 years ago, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain acquiesced to Germany's need for lebensraum. Plus ca change…

Fortunately for everyone interested in justice for Western Sahara, your Council now enters the debate over this conflict. Your work in arranging this presentation goes a long way to putting Western Sahara on the geo-political map for those unfamiliar with the issues, and for the rest of us, it explains why this 30 year old conflict is so important, not only to the Saharawis but to the great powers. It also emphasizes why Western Sahara is not a sideshow to be patronized by the U.N. as it concentrates on other hot spots in the world.

After the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York, people all over the world said: "We are all New Yorkers now." Through conferences like this one, I would hope that some day we might hear some one say: "We are all Saharawis now."

Thank you very much.