

Aide-Memoire

On Crans Montana's Planned Forum in Western Sahara

- The Swiss owned and managed organisation, the Crans Montana Forum, based in the Principality of Monaco, is planning to hold its 2015 annual session in the city of al-Dakhla in the Moroccan-occupied territories of Western Sahara on 12–14 March 2015.
- Western Sahara is still on the UN agenda as a Non-Self-Governing Territory pending decolonisation. It has never been part of Morocco that continues to occupy illegally large parts of the territory since 31 October 1975.
- In its historic advisory opinion on Western Sahara, issued on 16 October 1975, the International Court of Justice clearly established that there never existed any tie of territorial sovereignty between Western Sahara and Morocco or Mauritania. In 2002, the UN Under-Secretary for legal Affairs, Hans Corell, issued an advisory opinion at the request of the UN Security Council in which he reaffirmed unequivocally that Morocco does not exercise any sovereignty or administering power over Western Sahara.
- The United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) and the international community as a whole never have approved Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara or recognised the legality of its forceful annexation of the Territory.
- In accordance with its doctrine of not recognising as legal any territorial acquisition resulting from the use of force, the UN General Assembly has clearly described Morocco's presence in Western Sahara as an act of occupation by force (res. 34/37 of 21 November 1979 and res. 35/19 of 11 November 1980).
- As an occupying power, Morocco thus has no right whatsoever to deal with third parties concerning the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.
- The decision taken by the Crans Montana Forum to hold its 2015 annual session in the occupied city of al-Dakhla is, therefore, contrary to the rights and interests of the Sahrawi people and to the relevant principles of international law applicable to Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory.
- The Crans Montana Forum claims that choosing the occupied city of al-Dakhla as a venue for its forthcoming session is a "signal of the strong commitment of the organisation to peace and global dialogue." However, playing into the hands of Morocco's colonialist policy will only encourage and embolden the occupying power to persist in its illegal occupation of Western Sahara. The event may also open the door to further foreign investment and involvement in the territory in a way that will only complicate the situation on the ground and fuel more tension in the region.

- The Crans Montana Forum also claims that “it has been the first organisation to consider Africa’s major concerns and to foster its hopes and ambitions.” It is paradoxical that the announced Forum, which is supposed to address some of Africa’s major concerns, will be held in the last colony in Africa under the patronage of the occupying power. This fact casts doubt on the appropriateness and impartiality of such an initiative.
- Together with its obstructionist attitude toward the UN-led peace process in Western Sahara, Morocco continues to violate systematically human rights and international humanitarian law in the territories of Western Sahara under its illegal occupation. Currently, the entire territory is under a military siege and a total media blackout, while Morocco continues to ban international observers and media from entering the area.
- Moreover, Morocco persists in plundering illegally the natural resources of the occupied territory including fisheries, phosphates and other minerals often in complicity with foreign entities and in blatant violation of the permanent sovereignty of the Sahrawi people over their natural resources.
- The Sahrawi Government and the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO have officially expressed to the Crans Montana Forum their frustration and deep concern about the planned Forum, which is an unprecedented and provocative move that may have adverse consequences on the current developments of the question of Western Sahara.
- Deeply concerned about the Crans Montana’s decision to hold its forthcoming Forum in the occupied Western Sahara, the last colony in Africa, the African Union, of which the Sahrawi Republic is a founding Member State, unanimously adopted an important declaration, on 31 January 2015, urging the Swiss organisation and all organisers to cancel the meeting planned, as it is a grave violation of the international law. It further called upon the AU Member States, African civil society and all organisations not to participate in this Forum.
- All necessary representations, therefore, should be made toward the Crans Montana Forum and its associated partners and sponsors to urge them to refrain from holding its 2015 session in the occupied city of al-Dakhla.
- It is also crucial that national organisations and institutions that intend to participate in this Forum are urged to refrain from taking part in this event. They should be made aware that it is not in their interest to be associated with any acts that may lend legitimacy to an illegal and brutal occupation that persists in violating fundamental human rights and denying an entire people their inalienable right to self-determination and freedom.