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Explanation of Vote by Alejandro D. Wolff, Deputy U.S. Permanent Representative, on the adoption of UNSC resolution 1813 on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), at the Security Council, April 30, 2008

Thank you, Mr. President. I want to focus on the issue before us, but I also want to make clear that this does not mean we agree with the interpretation of either the process that led to the resolution or the representation of the substance of our arguments as described by Ambassador Urbina and Ambassador Kumalo.

Mr. President, the Western Sahara conflict has gone on too long, provoking tension, causing human suffering, and preventing progress toward regional integration in North Africa.

I am sure that all of us around this table yearn for a mutually agreed political solution to this conflict. Four rounds of discussions in the framework of the latest settlement initiative have, however, confirmed the difficulty of arriving at such a solution despite the seriousness, dedication, and sincerity of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Peter Van Walsum.

In the absence of a settlement, my government judges the mission of MINURSO to be vital. We are pleased that the Council has renewed its mandate for a full year and are gratified that it did so consensually. It is our hope that this will permit the parties to engage in the search for a solution in a sustained, intensive, and creative manner. To encourage them to do so, we intend to broaden our own engagement with them over the coming weeks and months.

For our part, we do agree with Mr. Van Walsum's assessment that an independent Sahrawi state is not a realistic option for resolving the conflict and that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution.

In our view, the focus of future negotiating rounds should therefore be on designing a mutually acceptable autonomy regime that is consistent with the aspirations of the people of the Western Sahara.

In this regard, Morocco has already produced a proposal that this Council has qualified as serious and credible, and we urge the Polisario to engage Morocco in negotiation of its details or to table a comprehensive autonomy proposal of its own.

Thank you, Mr. President.