

Morocco calls for resumption of Western Sahara talks

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NEW YORK: Morocco's permanent representative to the UN on Tuesday called for a resumption of negotiations over the situation in Western Sahara.

Speaking on the final day of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, Omar Hilale said Morocco is resolute in finding a solution to the "fabricated regional conflict" as an aid to promoting peace and stability in the region and Africa more widely.

"Morocco continues to support the efforts of the UN to relaunch roundtables with the same format and the same participants, especially Algeria, the main party to this conflict, in line with its Security Council resolution 2654," he added.

"We reaffirm, the solution can only be politically realistic and practical, based on consensus. The initiative for autonomy as part of the toolkit of Morocco's territorial integrity and national sovereignty remains the solution to this regional conflict. There's no alternative."

The Western Sahara conflict dates back to 1975, after the withdrawal of colonial occupier Spain, sparking a 15-year war between the Algeria-backed Polisario Front and Morocco for control over the territory.

A 1991 ceasefire deal brought fighting to an end, with Morocco in control of 80 percent of the resource-rich desert region and the Polisario Front clinging to hopes of a UN-supervised referendum on independence provided for in the deal.

Alongside calling for further work on bringing an end to the near half-century conflict, Hilale provided an update on efforts being undertaken by Moroccan authorities to respond to the devastating earthquake that struck at the start of the month.

"We've faced the repercussions of this earthquake, which led to the death of 3,000 people and injured 5,700 others, alongside grave material losses, but we face these repercussions with determination, seriousness and solidarity," he said.

"We established an inter-ministerial committee to develop an urgent program for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of affected areas, and located about \$12 billion for this program from our budget for the next five years.

"This shows climate change continues to represent the biggest challenge to humanity in the globe. This is why today, more than ever, there's a need to promote prevention, resilience, and international cooperation as part of the international community's priorities."