

**Kiribati Delegation statement to the Fourth Committee of the
75th Session of the General Assembly , 23rd October, 2020
on the issue of the Western Sahara**

As it is my first time to make an intervention in this Committee, please allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you on your appointment as chair of this meeting and also to the other esteemed members of the Bureau of this 4th Committee of the 75th Session of the General Assembly and to assure you and your esteemed colleagues of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

My delegation is honoured to participate in these discussions concerning, in particular, the wish for self-determination on the part of various groups of people in the world who feel that life for them would be much better if their wish for self determination is recognized by the United Nations.

We know from our own different experiences as former protectorates , colonies or dependencies of governance systems of other peoples and nations, how pleasant, satisfying and meaningful it is to feel free from such dependency and to have a sense of ownership over own own affairs and future.

Of course different countries which were former colonies and dependencies of other powers have their own stories to tell as to how they had achieved their wish for self determination or self government. Indeed, there are those who achieved it through long friendly discussions and negotiations with an outcome that were happily accepted on both sides and with a parting marked by jubilant celebrations on both sides. There are also those who achieved their wish for self determination through not so friendly means. There are also those who aspired only for internal autonomy and we have a number of states in the Pacific who have gladly chosen that form of self-determination and decided to continue on that path up to now.

My delegation is of the view that the United Nations should, from time to time, continue to embrace, consider and process, through the established free and peaceful means, all requests for self determination that come from groups of people who believe that their life would be better off by being allowed to take ownership of their own affairs and future rather than to be forced to live under rules and systems that are alien and meaningless to them. The most important test is in an outcome that both or all sides of the issue can happily accept and celebrate and which the UN and all of us can also celebrate.

Applying this approach, to the issue of the Western Sahara , my delegation would like to add to the many good views and thoughts that earlier speakers from other delegations have contributed as a way forward in the resolution of this issue.

Firstly, we would like to support the ongoing efforts of the UN and those who are encouraging the parties involved in the issue to come to the table as many times as possible with a positive

and genuine desire to move the issue forward in the most friendly, respectful and doable manner possible, all under the aegis of the UN.

Second, various forward pathways that have been proposed by the parties concerned should all be tabled and dealt with one at a time starting from the least to the most contentious. This one step at a time approach would enable the disputing parties to come together as early as possible in the process to celebrate a first small achievement that would inspire the parties to move further forward into the more difficult pathways ahead. It allows, as it were, the parties to quickly enjoy and celebrate the harvest of the low hanging fruits which all parties can benefit from before venturing out further, if they so wished, for the higher hanging fruits.

Third, the Moroccan Autonomy Initiative, the only meaningful, credible and practicable forward looking pathway that has been placed on the negotiating table as endorsed by the Security Council and as further acknowledged and reaffirmed recently by representatives of seven Governments of the Pacific Island, including Kiribati, in the context of the Morocco- Pacific Laayoune Declaration of 26 February, 2020, should now be dealt with as soon as possible in a manner suggested earlier. Equally, the same approach and manner be applied for other initiatives or pathways, if any, that other parties might wish to bring to the table. My delegation also acknowledges the important role that the African Union has played and will continue to play on this issue, being an intra - Africa decolonization matter.

My delegation, looks forward to the day when a win win and a happy happy outcome of these UN led discussions and negotiations will be celebrated not only by the parties concerned but by all peace loving peoples of the world.

I thank you.