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May 7, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton,

As you know, the United Nations Security Council on 30 April 2009 unanimously adopted resolution 1871 (2009) regarding Western Sahara that extends MINURSO's peacekeeping mandate for an additional year and encourages the parties to continue negotiations with "realism and a spirit of compromise." This action follows the recent appointment of one of our most seasoned and capable diplomats, Christopher Ross, as the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. I write to encourage you to support Ambassador Ross in his efforts to resolve the very difficult unsettled issues between Morocco and the Polisario Front. While challenging, these issues will eventually be solved, and I know that Ambassador Ross is committed to giving these two parties every opportunity and assistance to do so. His efforts to encourage small informal talks between the two parties have been well-received by the international community, and I know that you too are hopeful that this approach will lead to progress.

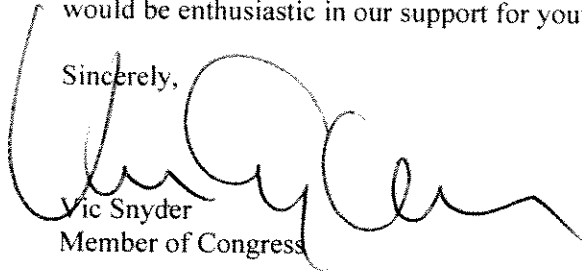
I am also encouraged by the very significant congressional interest in this issue as evidenced by the number of Members of the House of Representatives signing two recent letters regarding Western Sahara. While the two letters reach differing conclusions as to how the Western Sahara impasse should be resolved, it is heartening to see many Members become publicly involved in an issue which must seem quite remote to most of our constituents. I am honored to serve with so many men and women that care deeply about the aspirations of those living in other nations. I have attached the text of each letter in case you have not had an opportunity to read these articulate and sincere expressions of hope for this region of Africa.

I did not sign either letter because it is my view that Morocco and the Polisario Front must meet, negotiate, and resolve the lingering disputes between them. I concluded that having my signature on one letter or another taking sides in the dispute would be of little consequence to what ultimately will be the decisions of Morocco and the Polisario Front. And so my solution is, of course, to create this third letter.

You may be interested to know that a number of House staff is following the issue of Western Sahara including one from my office who, in addition to arranging our meetings with Ambassador Ross, has traveled to the region twice—once to visit the Saharawi camps in Algeria and a second time to see Western Sahara from the Moroccan perspective.

I wish you well in all that you do as Secretary of State. Please know that every Member of Congress wants you to succeed. I am confident that Christopher Ross, you and your department, and the United Nations and its member nations will do everything possible to resolve this frustratingly long conflict. Please know also that if Members of Congress can ever be of assistance in helping Morocco and the Polisario Front resolve their differences, I am certain we would be enthusiastic in our support for your efforts and those of Christopher Ross.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vic Snyder', written over a large, light-colored circular mark.

Vic Snyder
Member of Congress

Enclosures: 2

cc: Ambassador Chris Ross