

African Development Bank Group

Att: Akinwumi Adesina, President

Avenue Joseph Anoma

01 BP 1387 Abidjan 01

Côte d'Ivoire

Brussels, 03.05.2021

## **RE. AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK'S FINANCING OF MOROCCAN PROJECT IN OCCUPIED WESTERN SAHARA**

Your Excellency,

Western Sahara Resource Watch is privileged to write to you and is pleased to present you with the compliments of our board of directors. We hope this letter finds you well in the current phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our reason for writing is two-fold. We are writing to inquire about the African Development Bank's (AfDB) policy on Western Sahara and in relation to AfDB's financial support to a project of Morocco's national Office for Electricity and Drinking Water (ONEE) that is in part implemented in the last colony in Africa.

To begin with the latter point: mentioned project by ONEE foresees in the construction of a 400 KV Line Section in Double Tar and in Double Bundles, with a Length of around 100 Km.<sup>1</sup> This transmission line will connect Agadir, in Morocco, to Hagounia, occupied Western Sahara. Not explained in the tender, is that the project is part of a broader project, that also includes the construction of a 400 kV line between Hagounia and El Aaiun, with the express purpose of connecting energy generated in El Aaiún to Morocco's national grid. The line will essentially be used to offload electricity from the power plants in Western Sahara - that are all owned by Nareva, the Moroccan king's energy company – for transmission to Morocco.<sup>2</sup>

As such, the AfDB is financing part of the infrastructure that is geared towards connecting the Moroccan king's power plants in occupied Western Sahara to Morocco's national grid.

I also refer to our letter<sup>3</sup> of 19 June 2015 – whose reception was confirmed by AfDB, though never responded to – in which we referred to the risk for AfDB of becoming an active sponsor of Morocco's colonial project in Western Sahara, through providing the necessary finances for projects in Western Sahara, specifically in the field of renewable energy. Our particular concern was related to statements by ONEE that it had already secured investors for its solar and wind projects in occupied Western Sahara from, among others, the European Investment Bank, the European Commission, the World Bank and also the African Development Bank. When confronted with the true scale of Morocco's green energy plans, all these investors stated to the media that they would not invest in a project in Western Sahara, due to the political nature of such an activity. All except one; the African Development Bank. We are convinced that there is a simple and straightforward reason, namely that the AfDB was never notified about the scope of Morocco's renewable energy plans.

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<sup>1</sup> Tender SR4106829, available here: <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/aoi-maroc-realisation-des-lignes-400kv-doubles-ternes-agadir-ii-tantan-ii-et-tan-tan-ii-hagounia-onee-be>

<sup>2</sup> See: Africa Intelligence, Issue dated 24/02/2021, "Cegelec to connect Western Sahara's Laâyoune to extra-high voltage grid".

<sup>3</sup> [https://vest-sahara.s3.amazonaws.com/wsrw/feature-images/File/161/608be5ff08375\\_WSRW-AFDB\\_2015-2016.pdf](https://vest-sahara.s3.amazonaws.com/wsrw/feature-images/File/161/608be5ff08375_WSRW-AFDB_2015-2016.pdf)

However, given the status of Western Sahara, WSRW's was surprised to see Morocco's country page on African Development Bank's webpage.<sup>4</sup> Morocco is described as a territory of 712,550 sq km, which thus includes Western Sahara. This lends an unfortunate sign of credibility to Morocco's unacceptable discourse about its national territory.

We would be grateful if you could provide clarifications to the following questions:

1. Was the AfDB aware that part of the infrastructure foreseen in the ONEE tender is located outside of Morocco's internationally recognised borders, in Hagounia, occupied Western Sahara?
2. Was the AfDB aware that the transmission lines between Hagounia and Agadir that are covered by the ONEE tender, are part of a broader project, that includes additional transmission lines in occupied Western Sahara – connecting El Aaiún to Hagounia?
3. What is the scope of AfDB's investments in the Moroccan Solar Plan? Does it include financing those parts of the Program that are carried out in Western Sahara?
4. Has AfDB provided the financing requested by ONEE for Morocco's Integrated Wind Program? Does it include financing of the parts of the Program that are carried out in Western Sahara?
5. What is the official position of the AfDB with regard to investing – directly or indirectly - in projects in Western Sahara through Morocco? Will it issue a statement to make that position known to the public?
6. Will the AfDB install a policy or a transparent measure that ensures the early rejection of requests for investment in projects that are to be carried out in Western Sahara, as long as the political status of the territory remains unsettled?
7. Will the AfDB make the necessary changes to Morocco's country profile on its webpage, so as to accurately reflect the internationally recognized borders of the country and the political reality, in line with UN maps and in line with the position of the African Union?

Our reason for making these inquiries is straightforward. Western Sahara is a Non-Self-Governing Territory whose people have an internationally recognized right to self-determination. Morocco's claims to the territory have been rejected by the International Court of Justice. Western Sahara is a full Member of the African Union.

Strengthening Morocco's indefensible claim over Western Sahara by providing it the financial means to carry out its colonial plans in the territory gravely endangers the UN's efforts to peacefully settle the conflict through the principle of self-determination – the cornerstone legal principle in the decolonization of Africa. It is unthinkable that an institute such as the African Development Bank, rooted in the post-colonial drive to unite Africa, would choose to support the continued colonization of Western Sahara by Morocco.

WSRW is currently in the process of writing a report about Morocco's renewable energy plans in occupied Western Sahara. It is important to us that the role of the African Development Bank in relation to these projects is accurately reflected, and as such we would be grateful for your response by 18 May 2021. A reference to your reply will be made in the report or on our website.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or require further information in relation to the above-raised issue: we'll gladly oblige.

We thank you beforehand for your consideration of our letter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely

Sara Eyckmans

Coordinator, Western Sahara Resource Watch

[coordinator@wsrw.org](mailto:coordinator@wsrw.org)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.afdb.org/en/countries/north-africa/morocco/>