

Policy
brief °07

What's next for Morocco after the UN Security Council vote on Resolution 2797 ?

GEOPOLITICAL MONITOR

On October 31, 2025, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2797 with eleven votes in favour, three abstentions, and Algeria's non-participation. For the first time since the dossier entered the UN system, the Security Council has explicitly designated Morocco's autonomy initiative as the sole basis for negotiations, mentioning it six times within a single-page text that replaced the previous year's forty-three paragraph resolution. The preamble affirms that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty represents the most feasible solution, while the operative paragraphs eliminate any reference to a referendum and mandate the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to facilitate negotiations exclusively within this framework. The support of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom proved decisive, delivering the broadest majority Morocco has ever obtained on this dossier.

The path to this outcome revealed Washington's driven diplomatic strategy. The initial American draft, leaked in mid-October, was deliberately ambitious, describing Morocco's autonomy plan as "the only framework" for negotiations, proposing a mere three-month MINURSO renewal, and explicitly referencing President Trump's call for immediate discussions. This "zero draft" provoked sharp reactions, forcing several revisions before adoption. Simultaneously, Trump Special Envoy Steve Witkoff publicly announced in late September an audacious timeline: achieving a comprehensive Morocco-Algeria peace deal within sixty days. This diplomatic approach introduced a new phase of configuration, redefining the parameters of the conflict. Thus, the text marks a clean break with the previous resolutions.



Signals to Decode

The immediate aftermath of Resolution 2797's adoption reveals a landscape of contradictory narratives and divergent interpretations that will shape the negotiation environment. The most striking signal emerges from the gap between the text's explicit language and how key actors choose to read it. Morocco emphasizes what the text contains: six references to autonomy as the negotiation basis and sovereignty mentioned in the preamble. In contrast, UN Envoy Staffan de Mistura characterized the resolution as establishing a framework without predetermined outcomes, even though this formulation contradicts the text itself, which explicitly states that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty represents the most feasible solution.

The resolution's one-year mandate for MINURSO, coupled with the requirement for a strategic review within six months, sends an unmistakable signal about international patience with the status quo. The drastic reduction in the resolution's length and the elimination of extensive elements from previous resolutions, shows a deliberate narrowing of focus toward political process rather than operational mission management. This compression may suggest that the international community, particularly the United States, views the current configuration as transitional and expects demonstrable movement toward a negotiated settlement before MINURSO's mandate comes up for renewal in October 2026.



Does Morocco have a Role to Play?

Morocco's role in the post-Resolution 2797 environment extends far beyond diplomatic advocacy. The Kingdom must now transform international political support into institutional reality by updating and operationalizing its autonomy proposal in ways that make its viability tangible and its implementation credible. King Mohammed VI announced on October 31 that Morocco will proceed to update and formulate the autonomy initiative in detail for subsequent submission to the United Nations. This commitment acknowledges international expectations that the 2007 proposal, despite its strategic vision, requires substantive elaboration on governance structures, competency distribution, financial arrangements, and democratic mechanisms to serve as a negotiating text. As the proposal, from April 2007, lacks details and needs further development to increase its popularity to other parties and its attractiveness to the populations in the camps around Tindouf.

The updating process offers Morocco an opportunity to integrate advances made since 2007, particularly the reforms and the advanced regionalization framework. The 2011 Constitution, with provisions on subsidiarity, regional competencies, and participatory democracy, provide a foundation for demonstrating how autonomy would function within Morocco's existing institutional architecture. The challenge lies in articulating a model that grants meaningful self-governance to the southern provinces while maintaining coherence with the national territorial organization. Morocco must show that enhanced autonomy for one region does not create institutional asymmetries with the overall governance framework, but rather represents the fullest expression of principles applied throughout the Kingdom.



Points of Vigilance

The UN Personal Envoy Staffan de Mistura's public statements since the adoption of Resolution 2797 continue to privilege procedural "balance" over the resolution's clear substantive direction. By insisting on not "prejudging outcomes" and treating "various proposals" as equivalent inputs, the Envoy risks reintroducing the very parity that the Security Council has just buried. Morocco must therefore assert, diplomatically and without ambiguity, that the only legitimate discussion is no longer about the principle, but about the modalities of implementation of its own plan.

A related and particularly sensitive point of vigilance is the phrase "genuine autonomy" itself. The Security Council, following the United States, has used the adjective "genuine" without ever defining it. This deliberate vagueness allowed the broadest possible consensus in New York, but it now constitutes a potential point of leverage for the other parties. In the coming months, adversaries will inevitably argue that Morocco's plan, however serious and credible, is not "genuine enough" and that additional concessions are required to meet this undefined standard.

The absence of an internationally agreed definition of "genuine autonomy" therefore represents a vulnerability that Morocco must proactively close. The strategic objective must be to make the updated Moroccan autonomy plan the operational and universally accepted definition of what "genuine autonomy" means in practice.

OPPORTUNITIES & RISKS



Opportunities



Legal Consolidation

The first opportunity involves consolidating international legal recognition of Moroccan sovereignty through the autonomy framework's implementation. Once autonomy under sovereignty becomes the accepted basis for settlement, the sovereignty question itself moves from contestation to implementation. The European Court of Justice and other international bodies would need to align their approaches with the Security Council's framework, effectively resolving long-standing legal disputes about trade agreements, resource exploitation, and territorial status. Morocco can transform diplomatic support into legal normalization by demonstrating that its autonomy model functions effectively and enjoys legitimacy among the populations concerned.



Momentum for a Definitive Settlement

Resolution 2797 decisively isolates the other parties by making Morocco's Autonomy Plan under Moroccan sovereignty the sole internationally endorsed framework for resolution. This historic shift irreversibly moves the entire conflict resolution process onto Morocco's terms, depriving adversaries of any remaining credible alternative narrative. This creates unprecedented momentum toward a final, definitive settlement. The path to resolution is now narrower, clearer, and favorable to transform what has been a chronic stalemate into a conflict whose solution is finally in sight.



An Economic Leverage

The strengthened political stability and unprecedented international legitimacy conferred by Resolution 2797 will act as powerful catalysts for an acceleration of foreign and domestic investment in the Sahara. With the sovereignty framework now explicitly endorsed by the Security Council, investors who previously hesitated due to perceived political risk might move into the region. The renewable energy sector might attract billions of dollars in new projects; the future Atlantic port of Dakhla and its free zone will position the territory as a key logistic platform for West and Central Africa. Combined with the extension of the Nigeria-Morocco Atlantic Gas Pipeline and the Royal Atlantic Initiative, the Sahara Provinces are set to become the economic lung of Morocco's entire Atlantic facade and a continental hub connecting Europe, the Sahel, and West Africa. What was until recently considered a geopolitical liability could, within a few years, become one of the Kingdom's principal growth engines.



Risks:



Genuine Autonomy

As discussed prior, there's a significant risk arising from the deliberately undefined nature of the term "genuine autonomy" in Resolution 2797. This vagueness, which enabled the broadest possible consensus in the Security Council, could constitute a weapon of leverage for the other parties. Even if Morocco submits an updated autonomy plan that is objectively generous, institutionally robust, and widely praised as serious and credible, adversaries will systematically declare that it still falls short of being "genuine." They will

demand additional, often unacceptable concessions under the pretext that only such concessions would make the autonomy “genuine.” Without an explicit, collective international endorsement that Morocco’s plan fully satisfies the criterion of genuine autonomy, this semantic ambiguity risks becoming a point of obstruction.



MINURSO Mandate Renewals

There's a risk in the creeping normalisation of endless MINURSO mandate renewals, which would progressively bleed away the historic momentum created by Resolution 2797. The resolution’s one-year extension and six-month strategic review were designed to inject urgency, but if no substantive negotiations take place, the path of least resistance for the Security Council will be to simply roll over the mandate every October with minor technical adjustments. Each such renewal without visible progress will diminish the pressure on the conflict parties, dilute the sense of breakthrough achieved in 2025, and gradually transform the current dynamic of “final settlement within reach” into a new, more comfortable status quo.



Displacing the basis

The third risk lies in the probability that the other parties will attempt to displace discussions outside the strict framework imposed by Resolution 2797. Algeria and the Polisario could work relentlessly to reframe negotiations around preliminary “confidence-building measures,” “pre-negotiation modalities,” or parallel tracks that effectively reintroduce the past options, or competing proposals through the back door. Any acceptance of such displacement, even temporarily or procedurally, would undermine the resolution’s central achievement: the reduction of the political solution to a single, Security Council-endorsed basis. Once the framework is blurred or expanded, the dossier risks sliding back into the familiar paralysis of the past fifty years.

FORESIGHT

Looking ahead, Steve Witkoff’s sixty-day peace initiative places Algeria and the Polisario in an unprecedented strategic bind. Anyhow, it is highly unlikely that a peace deal will occur by mid-December. But President Trump has publicly declared his intention to resolve as many conflicts as possible during his term, making this case a presidential priority with personal investment from his closest advisers. This transforms what was previously a technical UN process into high-stakes American diplomacy, where refusing to engage carries direct consequences for bilateral relations with Washington. Algeria cannot simply dismiss the initiative as it did previous UN efforts, nor can it afford to alienate an administration that controls critical economic partnerships, security cooperation, and international financial institution support. The Polisario, dependent on Algerian backing, has even less room to maneuver taking into account a pending US designation as a terrorist entity. Their only viable path involves participating in American-hosted discussions while attempting to redefine what is being negotiated, claiming they are engaging in “good faith dialogue” rather than accepting the autonomy framework. However, this tactical ambiguity will progressively erode as Washington, having invested presidential credibility, will demand concrete movement rather than procedural gestures. Morocco holds the strongest position precisely because it can engage with the American initiative on substance, presenting its updated autonomy proposal as the constructive response to Trump’s peace push, while the other parties eventually isolating themselves as the principal obstacles to the regional stability and economic integration that the Trump administration seeks to achieve.

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