



United States Department of State

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

DEC 23 2015

The Honorable  
Joseph R. Pitts  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Pitts:

Thank you for your letter of November 19 regarding the use of bilateral economic assistance to Morocco within the disputed territory of the Western Sahara.

We are aware of language in S. 1725 and H.R. 2772 regarding U.S. assistance for the Western Sahara. Section 7041(g) of the FY 2015 Appropriations Act provides that title III funds shall be made available for assistance for the Western Sahara. The Department recognizes that few foreign assistance programs reach inhabitants of the Western Sahara who are in need of assistance, and President Obama has expressed his commitment to the improvement of the lives of the people of the Western Sahara.

The Department intends to support a governance program for the Western Sahara using FY 2015 regional Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) funds. This program will address the legitimate needs of the people of the Western Sahara. It will seek to strengthen civil society organizations and local representative bodies to bolster the ability of citizens to play an active role in making decisions that affect their lives.

This MEPI program does not reflect a change to longstanding U.S. policy regarding the Western Sahara. The United States supports the United Nations-led diplomatic process for Western Sahara and efforts to find a peaceful, sustainable and mutually-agreed solution to the conflict. The United States also supports the work of the UN Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Christopher Ross, and urges the parties to work toward a just, lasting, and mutually agreed political solution.

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance on this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Frifield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julia Frifield  
Assistant Secretary  
Legislative Affairs