
EU WELCOMES MOROCCO REJOINING AFRICAN UNION

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The European Union has welcomed a decision by African Union to readmit Morocco after 33 years of absence.

Morocco left the 54-strong AU in 1984, over the long-running dispute over Western Sahara, which it claims is part of its territory, whilst the Polisario Front want independence, and bordering Mauritania and Algeria also have claims on the land.

Geographically huge, it contains only some 500,000 people, most of whom live in the city of Laayoune.

A spokeswoman for EU Foreign Affairs chief Federica Mogherini said, The decision by the African Union to reintegrate Morocco as a member unites all of the African continent within its regional organisation.

Regional cooperation and integration are crucial for prosperity, stability and peace. Both the African Union and Morocco are key partners for the EU. We look forward to working with both the African Union and Morocco to consolidate the EUs growing partnership with Africa.

AFRICAN UNION SEEKS OWN SOLUTION TO SOUTH SUDAN CRISIS

The UN is rapidly running out of patience with the president and vice-president of South Sudan, but the Northeast African countrys neighbours have still not imposed any new sanctions on it. EurActivs partner Der Tagesspiegel reports.

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AU annual meeting

The decision came at the annual meeting of the AU in Addis Ababa, its headquarters and the Ethiopian capital.

I am finally home, King Mohammed VI said Tuesday as the African Union readmitted Morocco .

Moroccos return came a day after 39 of the AUs 54 member states agreed to allow it back in the fold, despite stiff resistance from countries such as South Africa and Algeria over the status of the disputed former Spanish colony.

Faced with the AUs decision, Western Sahara officials appeared to accept the new reality and cast

it in a positive light, saying AU membership might help speed up efforts to end a protracted conflict.

It is a beautiful day when one returns home after too long an absence, Mohammed VI told the closing ceremony of the AU summit in Ethiopia.

Africa is my continent and my home. I am finally home and I am happy to see you. I missed you all.

AFRICAN UNIONS SOMALIA MISSION HIT BY EU FUNDING CUT

The African Union (AU) has criticised the EUs decision to cut funding for its peace-keeping mission in Somalia by 20% at a time when it is entrenched in a deadly battle with terrorist militants. EurActiv Germany reports.

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His speech came after a long day of feverish speculation in the halls of the AU headquarters over whether he would indeed show up, and protocol confusion which saw his foreign minister given a talking to in front of some media after he tried to enter the main plenary hall during a heads of state meeting.

Morocco quit the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1984 after the bloc admitted the former Western Sahara as a separate member.

Morocco maintains that the territory under its control is an integral part of the kingdom, while the Polisario Front, which campaigns for independence, demands a referendum on self-determination.

Some had feared Morocco would seek the expulsion of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as a precondition for its own return to the AU, however the country agreed to return without conditions.

From the moment that Morocco did not impose conditions * we take their word for it and accept that Morocco be admitted to the African Union, said Mohamed Salem Ould Salek, foreign minister of the SADR, which claims sovereignty over the entire territory of Western Sahara.

EU COURT CASTS DOUBT ON MOROCCO'S CLAIM TO WESTERN SAHARA

Two deals between Morocco and the European Union do not apply to Western Sahara, the EUs top court said during a raft of rulings made yesterday (21 December), in a decision that a group seeking the disputed territorys independence said was a victory for its cause.

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Salek said Monday that having Morocco in the same room would allow the SADR to pressure them into fulfilling their obligations and hold a long sought referendum.

King Mohammed did not raise the issue of Western Sahara in his speech, choosing instead to highlight how Morocco as one of the most developed African nations, could be a boon to the continent.

We do not ignore the fact that we do not have unanimity in this noble assembly. We do not want to create divisions as some have insinuated, he said.

My vision of South-South cooperation is clear and constant. Morocco ✱ will be a motor for common economic growth.

It is time that Africa's riches benefit Africa. For too long we have looked elsewhere to make decisions, commitments. Is it not time to turn towards our own continent?

African Union presidency

The AU summit also saw Chadian foreign minister Moussa Faki Mahamat take over from South Africa's Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as AU commission chief after a fierce election battle that eliminated four other candidates.

Guinea's Alpha Conde took over the rotating presidency of the bloc, and called for the continent to express solidarity with Somalia, Libya and Sudan, which have been targeted by a United States travel ban.

A combative Conde also called for more urgency in reforming the United Nations so that Africa could get a permanent seat on the Security Council – a long-running demand from the continent.

He appointed South African President Jacob Zuma to lead negotiations with the UN, and also look into the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations on the continent.

What is the role of the blue helmets? What purpose does this army serve? Conde asked, pointing to ongoing violence in places like South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo.

He also appointed Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni to negotiate on behalf of the continent with the European Union on the issue of migrants.

On the migration problem we need to speak with one voice.

Kaynak/Source: