



INDEPENDENT DIPLOMAT

THE DIPLOMATIC ADVISORY GROUP

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A quick update on developments at Independent Diplomat.

Marshall Islands / Climate Change

Both the President and Foreign Minister of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) will visit the US over the next week to alert the world to the impending disaster facing their country and other island states if global CO2 emissions continue to grow unchecked and the seas continue to rise.

On 23 to 25 May, the RMI Government will co-host a [groundbreaking conference with Columbia University's Climate Change Law Center](#) to highlight and consider the largely unstudied legal implications of climate change's worst impacts on small island developing states, including sea-level rise, loss of territory, involuntary population displacement and even statelessness. RMI Foreign Minister H.E. John Silk will open the conference, and ID's climate change expert, Dean Bialek, will present a paper on possible legal avenues for addressing ocean acidification, a problem that was covered extensively in last month's edition of [National Geographic](#).

Separately, Foreign Minister Silk will advance discussion of the security implications of climate change when addressing UN diplomats at an event at the German Mission to the UN on 20 May, a precursor to the German-led Security Council debate on the same topic in July 2011.

Western Sahara

As the 'Arab Spring' reshapes the political landscape in the Middle East and North Africa, discussions at the UN in April on Western Sahara once again highlighted the [Security Council's contradictions](#) in supporting the use of military force to foster democratic change in Libya and Ivory Coast, and on the other hand failing to advance a democratic solution and human rights in Western Sahara.

Throughout April, ID again worked hand-in-hand with the Frente POLISARIO to steer Security Council deliberations on Western Sahara one step closer to the holding of a referendum on self-determination which is key to unlocking the 30-year political stalemate over the future of Africa's last colony.

After a four-year battle in the Security Council against French vetoes on the issue, the Security Council's [Resolution 1979](#) for the first time acknowledges the need for the international community to implement "independent and credible measures to ensure full respect for human rights" in Western Sahara, and calls on

Morocco to provide “unhindered and immediate access for the United Nations” within the Territory, a firm rebuff to Morocco’s efforts to hide from international scrutiny its violent crackdowns on peaceful protests by the Saharawi people, including that at [Gdeim Izik](#) in November 2010.

But in perhaps the most significant new development, the Security Council called on the parties to focus on the UN Secretary-General’s recommendation that any solution must have the approval of the population of Western Sahara, as expressed in a “referendum that will constitute a free exercise of the right to self-determination”. This is what the people of Western Sahara have been demanding for every one of the 35 years since Morocco illegally invaded their country.

Somaliland

This week, the Republic of Somaliland is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its declaration of independence on 18 May 1991. ID congratulates the government and people of Somaliland on their historic achievement. Its success in building a peaceful, stable and resilient democracy in the otherwise volatile Horn of Africa is a true testament to the determination and resolve of its people.

A British Protectorate until 1960, Somaliland was first granted independence on 26 June 1960, but just five days later chose to join the former Italian Somalia to form the Somali Republic. After 30 years of troubled union, including a civil war from the 1980s, the people of Somaliland decided to withdraw from the Union and to reinstate Somaliland’s sovereign independence.

ID continues to work with Somaliland to improve its international outreach and diplomacy, including cooperative efforts to enhance regional security, build long-term relationships with key development partners, and to help make the case for Somaliland to take its place among the community of nations.

