

One of the most keenly debated issues in human evolutionary research concerns the African origins and dispersal of *Homo sapiens*. Northwest Africa is becoming an interesting African area with the occurrence of early *Homo sapiens* within the Middle Stone Age. In this region, several sites contain stratified sequences with exceptionally well-preserved organic remains offering rich sources of multi-proxy data for palaeoenvironmental and chronological studies.

The Northwest Africa is of key interest in the understanding of human evolution and behavioural development. A broader theme identified and could be discussed in the session concerns the nature, chronology and human associations with the cultural sub-division of the Middle Stone Age. New radiometric data move the Late Stone Age back in time to more than what it was known in North Africa. From calibrated record of AMS dates, the data of this region are compared with the global marine isotope record.

Amongst the key issues to be identified so far are: How early is the MSA and the LSA in this region, does their appearance signify the arrival of new populations ? Is there any relationship between the LSA and the late MSA ? What is the environmental context of the MSA and the LSA ? The aim of the commission is not to answer all of these questions but to stimulate further discussion and to act as an introduction to other contributions that will cover the themes described above in more detail.