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New York, 9 October 2018

Your Excellency,

The Frente POLISARIO takes note of the report of the UN Secretary-General (S/2018/889) on the situation concerning Western Sahara, submitted to the Security Council on 3 October 2018, and would like to bring to the attention of Security Council Members our views regarding several elements contained in the Report.

First, we would like to reiterate our full cooperation with the Secretary-General's efforts. We are encouraged by the commendable efforts of UN Personal Envoy, Mr Horst Köhler, to relaunch the **negotiating process** between the two parties to the conflict, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco. We, the Frente POLISARIO, have officially accepted the invitation of the UN Personal Envoy for the initial roundtable meeting scheduled to take place in Geneva early December 2018, and we stand ready to engage in **direct negotiations in good faith and without preconditions** with Morocco under the UN auspices in line with Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2414 (2018).

Like the UN Secretary-General, we believe that MINURSO's "*role is predicated on its ability to impartially and independently fulfil the mandate set forth by the Security Council*" (Paragraph 80). We therefore urge the Security Council to address the longstanding issues that continue to seriously undermine the credibility, impartiality and independence of the Mission. This includes steps to resolve the following issues, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report:

- **Unacceptable Status Quo:** Paragraph 56 acknowledges that "*the Mission's lack of access to interlocutors continues to limit its ability to form an independent assessment of the situation in Western Sahara west of the berm*". This situation is exacerbated by the fact that MINURSO vehicles are forced to bear Moroccan number plates and that Morocco continues to affix Moroccan stamps on the passports of MINURSO personnel upon their entry to and exit from Western Sahara. These actions are indicative of an unacceptable state of affairs that undermines the impartiality, independence and credibility of MINURSO and the United Nations itself.
- **Tackle the Root Causes of the Crisis:** Paragraph 8 refers to Paragraph 9 of resolution 2414 (2018), which calls on the UN Secretary-General to seek to better understand the "*fundamental questions related to the ceasefire and related agreements*". We must underscore that such fundamental questions remain unanswered precisely because the underlying causes of the tension in the Buffer Strip in Guerguerat have not been resolved. In this regard, the Frente POLISARIO firmly believes that addressing the situation effectively requires a comprehensive approach that examines and tackles the underlying causes of the crisis and its implications for the existing military agreements that sustain the status quo in the Territory and the UN political process as a whole.
- **Illegal Attempts to normalise Occupation:** We are deeply concerned by the illegal attempts to "normalise" the occupation and illegal annexation of Western Sahara by Morocco, where the annexationist practices of the occupying power seem to raise no questions as to their legality and consequences. Morocco's persistent attempts to use the Mission as a tool to legitimise its illegal claims of militarily imposed

sovereignty on our country have reached outrageous proportions, and they must be confronted robustly for the sake of peace and security in the region. The Frente POLISARIO once again calls on the Security Council to uphold clearly and forcefully the legal status of Western Sahara, as a Non-Self-Governing Territory, and to preserve its territorial integrity pending a definitive solution to the conflict, and to guarantee that MINURSO operates in line with basic standards and general principles applicable to UN peacekeeping operations.

- **Constructive Relationship with SRSG:** We would like to emphasise that the relationship and interaction between MINURSO, including with SRSG Mr Colin Stewart, and the Frente POLISARIO continue at multiple levels, and we are committed to continuing our full and constructive cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Western Sahara and Head of MINURSO. In addition to his meeting with Mr Mhamed Khadad, the Sahrawi Coordinator with MINURSO, I myself met Mr Colin Stewart at the United Nations as recently as 8 October 2018. Indeed, had it not been for the full and constructive interaction between the Frente POLISARIO and the SRSG, it would have been impossible to address some of the major outstanding issues.

We would also like to underscore that our position on meeting the SRSG is forged on a sound legal basis. The definition of the mission area of MINURSO is clearly established by the relevant agreements accepted by both parties and approved by the Security Council, which includes mainly the Territory of Western Sahara within its internationally recognised borders. For this reason, the UN Special Representative, Head of the Mission, and other senior officials of the Mission should be able to meet with the Frente POLISARIO at any location within the boundaries of the Territory. Furthermore, the notion that the Frente POLISARIO cannot meet with MINURSO leadership in our own Territory, over which the United Nations does not recognise any *de jure* or *de facto* Moroccan sovereignty, is excessive and dangerous.

Your Excellency, we are at an important moment in history. We are hopeful that the proposed meeting in Geneva will mark the beginning of a sustained, substantive and purposeful process of serious and direct negotiations between the two parties with a view to achieving a just, peaceful and lasting solution, which ensures the inalienable right of our people to self-determination and contributes to restoring regional peace and security. It is critical that all Member States do their utmost to ensure that these talks succeed, and that our people have the outcome they so rightly deserve.

I would be most grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the Members of the Security Council. Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Dr Sidi M. Omar

Representative of the Frente POLISARIO at the United Nations



H. E. Mr Sacha Sergio Llorentty Solíz
Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations
President of the Security Council