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THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

**Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International
Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: accelerating decolonization
through renewed commitment and pragmatic measures**

Saint George's, Grenada

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STATEMENT BY

SIDI MOHAMED OMAR

(FRENTE POLISARIO (WESTERN SAHARA))

Statement of the Frente POLISARIO (Western Sahara)
C-24 2019 Pacific Regional Seminar, St. George's, Grenada, 2-4 May 2019

Sidi M. Omar

Madame Chair,
Distinguished Representatives and Delegates of Member States,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address the Committee for the second time here in Grenada on behalf of the Frente POLISARIO, the legitimate and UN-recognised representative of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, which has been on the agenda of this Committee since 1963.

The theme of the seminar dealing with the “*Implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: accelerating decolonization through renewed commitment and pragmatic measures*” is relevant to the question of Western Sahara. It is my intention therefore to share with you the views of the Frente POLISARIO on the current situation and the way forward in the decolonisation process of the Territory.

The question of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory is a straightforward and clear-cut issue of decolonisation in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly, which is the principal organ of the UN with the responsibility regarding matters of decolonisation. The decolonisation process of Western Sahara was however interrupted violently due to Morocco’s military invasion and occupation of the Territory on 31 October 1975, an occupation that was deplored by the Security Council and the General Assembly in an unequivocal manner.

In its resolution 380 of 6 November 1975, the Security Council strongly deplored the holding of the Moroccan so-called “green march” which marked the beginning of the military invasion of our country. In operative paragraph 2 of resolution 380, the Security Council (*I quote*) “calls upon Morocco immediately to withdraw from the Territory of Western Sahara all the participants in the march” (*unquote*).

The General Assembly, representing the common voice of the international community, has also deplored deeply the Moroccan occupation, which was carried out in violation of the objectives and purposes of the UN Charter and fundamental principles of International law. In operative paragraph 5 of its resolution 34/37 of 21 November 1979, the General Assembly (*I quote*) “deeply deplores the aggravation of the situation resulting from the continued occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco and the extension of that occupation to the territory recently evacuated by Mauritania” (*unquote*). In operative paragraph 6 of the same resolution, the General Assembly further (*I quote*) “urges Morocco to join in the peace process and to terminate its occupation of the Territory of Western Sahara” (*unquote*).

In operative paragraph 3 of its resolution 35/19 of 11 November 1980, the General Assembly (*I quote*) “again declares that it is deeply concerned at the aggravation of the situation deriving from the continued occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco and from the extension of that occupation to the part of Western Sahara which was the subject of the peace agreement concluded on 10 August 1979 between Mauritania and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saquia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro” (*unquote*). In operative paragraph 9 of the same resolution, the General Assembly further (*I quote*) “reiterates the appeal contained in its resolution 34/37 whereby it urged Morocco to join in the peace process and to terminate the occupation of the Territory of Western Sahara” (*unquote*).

The presence of Morocco in Western Sahara is therefore an illegal military occupation, and this is a well-established fact, despite the futile efforts of the occupying power and its apologists to convince the Committee and others of something different, using to that end all sorts of manipulation, misinformation and other underhanded methods. For that reason, all actions undertaken by the Moroccan occupying State

in Western Sahara, whether they are political, social, economic, and cultural or of any other character are essentially colonial practices imposed by force. They are also contrary to the principles of both international law and international humanitarian law, and hence they have no legal legitimacy and cannot have any effect on the legal status of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

Now let me say this loud and clear. The conflict in Western Sahara is not a sectarian, ethnic or civil war. We do not have any conflict with our sisters and brothers who live under Morocco's occupation or anywhere else. The conflict in Western Sahara, which is dealt with by the UN Security Council, is an international conflict between two well-defined parties. The Frente POLISARIO, the legitimate and UN-recognised representative of the people of Western Sahara on the one hand, and Morocco, which occupies by force parts of the Territory, on the other. On this note, let me also clarify that we do not have any problem with the Moroccan people but with an expansionist regime that has occupied our land and deprived our people of their fundamental right to self-determination for over four decades.

The deplorable Moroccan occupation and annexation of parts of our land continues to date, and it has had dire consequences on our people in terms of well-documented gross human rights violations in the occupied Territories and massive plunder of our natural resources with the complicity of third entities. In this regard, we are deeply concerned about Morocco's persistent policies that aim to "normalise" its illegal annexation of parts of our land. These include holding elections and international conferences in the occupied territories, building infrastructure for Moroccan settlers and entrenching its military and administrative presence in our land, among other things, in violation of the principles of the international humanitarian law.

The Moroccan continued occupation and illegal annexation of parts of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, which have been unequivocally deplored by the General Assembly, is the root cause of the long-lasting conflict in Western Sahara. As a matter of fact, Morocco's flagrant attempts to appropriate sovereignty over a Non-Self-Governing Territory on the agenda of this Committee, and without a due and valid decolonisation process, remains the main obstacle to the accomplishment of the decolonisation of the Territory. It is also the major stumbling block for making progress in the ongoing UN-led peace process aiming to achieve a peaceful, just and lasting solution to question of Western Sahara.

Thanks to the engagement of the Security Council and the intensive efforts of the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara, President Horst Köhler, there is now a new dynamic in place since April 2018 reflected in a serious resolve to break up with the status quo and to advance the UN peace process in Western Sahara. The result of such a dynamic was the first face-to-face meetings between the two parties in six years, which were held in Geneva in December 2018 and March 2019.

In Geneva meetings, we engaged constructively, without preconditions and in good faith. To create the propitious climate necessary to achieve progress on the political track, we have also taken steps with respect to confidence building measures, which have been commended by the UN Secretary-General. Our constructive engagement stands in stark contrast to the other party, Morocco, which has done precisely the opposite. As described in the report of the UN Secretary-General (S/2019/282) on the situation concerning Western Sahara, dated 1 April 2019, Morocco has recently embarked on a series of bad faith gestures that have destabilised the situation on the ground and exacerbated tensions in the Territory. Morocco has increased the pace and magnitude of its violations to the ceasefire in place since 1991 and brutally repressed the Sahrawi population living in the occupied territories. Morocco has also done its utmost to disrupt and derail the UN-led peace process, including by refusing to undertake confidence building measures to demonstrate its willingness to make progress in the political process.

On 30 April 2019, the Security Council adopted its resolution 2468 (2019), whereby it extended the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for a period of six months. In the resolution, the Security Council reiterated its call on the two parties—the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco—to resume negotiations under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General without preconditions and in good faith, with a view to achieving a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

In this regard, the Frente POLISARIO reaffirms that the only practicable, realistic and enduring solution is one that grants our people their inalienable right to decide their own fate freely, democratically and without preconditions. The *raison d'être* of the Frente POLISARIO is to defend the inalienable rights and legitimate aspirations of the Sahrawi people and we will accept nothing less than the full respect for our people's inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

By renewing the Mission's mandate for six months for the third consecutive time, the Security Council has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the UN peace process in Western Sahara, despite the strong opposition of those who seek to maintain the status quo. However, the Security Council could have done more to follow through on its commitment to end the status quo and demand that Morocco cease its illegal occupation of Western Sahara. The failure of the Security Council to unequivocally condemn Morocco's destabilising actions and rampant bad faith efforts only emboldens the Moroccan occupying power to persist in its intransigence, and undermines an already fragile political process.

The continuous consideration by this Committee of the situation in Western Sahara, at the request of the General Assembly, is a testament to the unfinished decolonisation of the Territory. It also testifies to the fact that the inalienable right of our people to self-determination and independence is unnegotiable, and that it can never be overtaken by the current colonial realities created in the Territory by the occupying power, Morocco, through its prolonged occupation and intensified settlement and repressive policies.

The responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara, which is reaffirmed every year in the General Assembly resolutions on the matter, should be assumed without further delay. The United Nations and its relevant policy organs, therefore, are called upon to take all the necessary measures to preserve the territorial integrity of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, and to ensure the exercise by our people of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. In particular, the Special Committee is called upon to continue to follow closely the situation on the ground in the Territory and to consider, among other things, dispatching a visiting mission to the Territory, which is a vital request that has been made before this Committee on several occasions. It is really hard to understand that the first and last visit of the Committee to the Territory of Western Sahara was conducted in 1975!

In concluding, I would like to cite the words of my predecessor, Ambassador Ahmed Boukhari, may he rest in peace, who once addressed this Committee saying the following in Spanish (*I quote*) “*el Comité Especial fue establecido para erradicar el colonialismo y no para legitimarlo. Marruecos es una potencia colonizadora y ustedes lo saben*” (*unquote*) (The Special Committee was established to eradicate colonialism, and not to legitimise it. Morocco is a colonising power, and you know it).

The way forward in the decolonisation process of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara is therefore straightforward and clear if there is a genuine political will to uphold the principles of international legality and the General Assembly resolutions on this matter. All is needed is essentially to end the Moroccan illegal occupation of the Territory, and to allow its people the chance to exercise freely and democratically their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

I thank you all for your attention!