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FORTH INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories through the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond

Castries, Saint Lucia

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STATEMENT BY

MR. SIDI MOHAMED OMAR

(FRENTE POLISARIO (WESTERN SAHARA))

Statement of the Frente POLISARIO (Western Sahara)
C-24 Pacific Regional Seminar, Saint Lucia, 11-13 May 2022

Ambassador Sidi M. Omar

Madam Chair,

Distinguished Representatives and Delegates of Member States,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address the Special Committee today in Saint Lucia on behalf of the Frente POLISARIO, the legitimate and sole Representative of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara in line with relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

These are crucial times for the decolonisation of Western Sahara because of the act of aggression perpetrated by the occupying state of Morocco against Sahrawi Liberated Territories on 13 November 2020, which has led to the breakdown of almost thirty years of ceasefire, as recognised by the Security Council in its latest resolution 2602 (2021), preambular paragraph 14.

In my statement today, I will briefly address the situation concerning the decolonisation process in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.

Madam Chair,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The question of Western Sahara, the last Non-Self-Governing Territory in Africa, has been on the agenda of the C-24 since December 1963. Despite the efforts of the United Nations, the Organisation of the African Unity and currently the African Union, the decolonisation of the Territory has not been accomplished yet.

The main reason for the delay in the decolonisation of Western Sahara is very clear. It is the continued, illegal military occupation by Morocco of the Territory since 31 October 1975, which the General Assembly deeply deplored in its resolutions 34/37 of 21 November 1979 and 35/19 of 11 November 1980, and other relevant resolutions.

Despite the misleading accounts propagated by the occupying state of Morocco and its apologists, which we often hear in this Committee and elsewhere, this is the undeniable fact.

To mislead public opinion regarding its illegal military occupation of Western Sahara, the occupying state of Morocco often claims that it was behind the UN decision to include Western Sahara on its list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Official Records of the UN General Assembly clearly refute this baseless claim. Suffice it to recall the

meeting of the UN Fourth Committee, held in New York on 9 December 1963, in which the Moroccan representative officially expressed his opposition to Spain's decision to recognise the then Spanish Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory, and to transmit information on the Territory in line with article 73 (e) of the UN Charter.

However, the occupying state of Morocco may take the credit (which later turned out to be a disgrace) for having included "the problem of Mauritania" in the agenda of the 50th session of the General Assembly in 1960 on the grounds that Morocco had legitimate rights over Mauritania.

There are many other historical established facts that reveal Morocco's relentless territorial claims to all its neighbours and beyond, and they all have one name written on them. It is expansionism employed by a regime suffering from a deep crisis of domestic legitimacy after being challenged by two military coups d'état in July 1971 and August 1972. To divert public attention and shore up the shaky foundations of its rule, the regime in Morocco has embraced expansionism as an official state policy and as a ruthless tool to secure its own survival.

This is the undeniable fact and the key to understand why the regime in Morocco invaded and occupied the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara in 1975, and why it persists in its destabilising actions that threaten the peace and security of the entire region and beyond.

Madam Chair,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The situation of the Sahrawi people living in the Territories under Moroccan illegal occupation has worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic at a time when the occupying state continues to intensify its repressive and colonial practices and policies.

These practices include the ongoing repression of Sahrawi civilians and human rights activists such as the case of human rights activist Sultana Sid Brahim Jaya who has been subjected to all sorts of physical and psychological violence including rape and repeated attempts on her life. They also include changing of the demographic nature of the Territory through intensive and incentivised settlement policies in violation of the principles of international humanitarian law; destruction of cultural heritage; and plunder of the natural resources, among many other things.

Obviously, all these actions are illegal colonial practices imposed by force, and hence they cannot have any effect on the status of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. The so-called "local" entities created by the occupying state of

Morocco in Western Sahara to “show” a fictitious reality of the Territory and its people, which exists only in the imagination of the occupying state, are merely colonial “creations” that bring to mind a typical colonial pattern that is quite familiar to some of you and to this Committee too.

Madam Chair,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The legal nature of Western Sahara as a decolonisation issue on the agenda of this Committee since 1963 is abundantly clear.

Therefore, as I have stated on previous occasions, the question before the Members of this Committee comes down to this: do they allow Morocco’s expansionism and policy of *fait accompli* to persist in the case of Western Sahara, and thus allow the Moroccan military occupation of parts of the Territory to endure with impunity, or do they remain true to the founding principles underpinning the mandate of this very Committee and therefore call for the immediate and unconditional end of Morocco’s occupation to allow the decolonisation of the Territory to proceed in line with relevant UN resolutions?

Given the fundamental principles that are at stake in this case as well as the gravity of the current situation and its potentially dangerous consequences on peace and security in the region, the options are very clear.

Obviously, territorial expansionism and the logic of force cannot be an option; otherwise, many peoples and countries, including Member States that are present here today, would have remained under colonial rule and foreign occupation. The only option, therefore, is to defend the principles of international legality and bring the decolonisation of Western Sahara to its conclusion through the free, genuine, and democratic expression of the sovereign will of the Sahrawi people in the exercise of their inalienable and non-negotiable right to self-determination and independence.

This is the only valid way forward to bring about a peaceful and just end to the long-awaited decolonisation of the last colonial case in Africa, and with it the end of one of the ugliest and most brutal chapters of the history of our continent.

I thank you for your attention.