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THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Non-Self-Governing Territories: social, economic and environmental challenges

**Saint George's, Grenada
9 to 11 May 2018**

STATEMENT BY

MR. MHAMED ABBA

(WESTERN SAHARA)

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates and participant,

Allow me at the at the outset, to express my **gratitude** to the President and the Bureau of C24 for inviting me, and allowing me, as an elected Sahraoui for the region, to participate, for the first time, in this meeting.

I am original from the city of Laayoune. I am the vice -president of the Region Laayoune Sakia Elhamra, composed of the cities of Laayoune, Boujdour, Smara and Tarfaya. I was democratically elected by local populations during the municipal and regional elections that took place in all the parts of the Kingdom of Morocco on the 4/9/2015. My bureau is composed of a president and 6 vice-presidents, 3 of which are women, in due total respect of gender equality.

The elections in the two regions of the Sahara, Laayoune Sakia Elhamra and Dakhla Ouad Dahab, knew the highest rate of the participation and voting. With 70% of national participation rate. Those elections were held under the supervision of 4000 national and international observer. On the 8th of December 2015, Kim Bolduc, head of Minurso, confirmed, during her briefing to the Security Council, that the local elections that were held in the Sahara, in September, **“went without incident and in calm atmosphere insofar as Minurso could observe”**. Likewise, the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon, stated in his April report that the municipal and regional elections were conducted without incident.

Mr. Chair,

We, democratically elected people, from the two regions, Laayoune Sakia El Hamra and Dakhla Ouad Dahab, **exercise power** through managing our own domestic affairs and our own **Budget**, the amount of which is 8 billion US Dollars, covering the period 2016-2021.

The elected members of the local **professional Chambers** participate, together with the elected **Council Members**, in the **management of this budget** as well as in the creation of lucrative projects that benefit local populations, namely through creating job opportunities.

My elected Council members, together with the professional elected Chambers and local companies, are working on the following projects:

❖ **In the field of economic and industrial development: the total budget is 861.3 Million USD**, it includes the following projects:

- 59 projects will consist of 17 projects in Dakhla-Oued Eddahab;
- 39 projects in Laayoune-Sakia ElHamra- with 36 projects in the city of Laayoune, 2 projects in Boujdour and 1 project in Tarfaya and include:
 - 13 projects in the industry sector, creating 3011 jobs;
 - 5 projects in real estate, creating 6005 jobs.

- Projects in energy and renewable energy sectors, creating 400 jobs.
 - Projects in trade and services, creating 150 jobs
 - Job creation and support for private initiatives
 - The construction of a Cement factory “CIMSUD”, creating 75,000 jobs during the implementation phase and 170 jobs in the operational phase.
- ❖ **In the field of agriculture and fishery: the total budget is 1.869 Billion USD.** It includes the following projects:
- * The agricultural upgrading of 5000 acres in Dakhla and 1000 acres in Boujdour;
 - * The development of the solidarity-based agriculture program “Green Morocco” in the region of Laayoune-Sakia El Hamra with 50 projects.
 - * The development of important projects at the Dakhla-Oued Ed-Dahab region that will create 8,000 jobs that include:
 - The valorization of marine products with a cost of 120 Million USD, creating 4,300 jobs.
 - The promotion of fish farming industry will cost 370 Million USD.
 - The aquacultural development plan will cost 280 Million USD. It will include 878 production units, and create 3,350 direct jobs.
 - The construction of a desalination plant of seawater for agricultural purposes with a budget of 130 million USD.
 - The construction of the large Atlantic port of Dakhla, which will cost 600 Million USD.
 - The new fish market of Dakhla with a budget of 2.6 Million USD
 - The development of solidarity agriculture with a budget of USD 81 million.
- ❖ **In the field of tourism and culture: the total budget is 210 Million USD.** It includes 84 touristic projects, namely:
- The establishment of an eco-tourism center in Dakhla with a budget of 58.1 Million USD.
 - The promotion of ecotourism by promoting the natural, cultural and ecological potential of the region with a budget of 97.1 Million USD.
 - The creation of a museum dedicated to the enrichment of the heritage of the southern provinces with a budget of 10 Million USD, aimed at promoting the Hassani culture, as underlined in the Moroccan Constitution.
- ❖ **In the fields of health, high technology and education: Total budget of 520 Million USD.** It includes the following projects:

- The “Laayoune University Hospital Center” with a budget of 120 Million USD, and a capacity of 500 beds, 14 operating rooms.
- A town with high-tech industrial facilities in “Foum El Oued” which will cost 200 Million USD and will host :
 - The “Mohammed VI multidisciplinary University of Laayoune”, with an investment of 55 Million USD and a capacity of 2500 students and researchers.
 - a “High school of Excellence” with a capacity of 360 students for high school and 200 students for preparatory classes for the leading schools “Grandes Ecoles”.
 - a capacity-building and Industrial Skills center offering training programs in various fields.

Mr Chair,

At the end of our mandate, the locally elected Council members present, to the sahraoui populations, an assessment report and a statement of account that contains details of projects and expenditure of budget with respect to the full application of good governance and accountability.

One of the major objectives of the Council is to double the local GDP, through creating projects and job opportunities and stimulating financial resources, to allow sahraoui populations to benefit from their own resources.

Mr Chair,

I am here today, as a democratically elected Sahraoui, representing the local population of the Sahara region.

Me, and my elected Council, are mandated to legally and democratically represent the local population, listen to them, share their daily concerns, exchange with them, and promote their welfare, which make of us the real and the legitimate representatives of the sahraoui populations.