Africa

1. The situation concerning Western Sahara

During 2020, the members of the Security Council held one open videoconference in connection with this item to announce the adoption of resolution 2548 (2020). More information on the videoconferences is given in the table below. In addition, the members of the Council held two closed videoconferences to discuss the situation in Western Sahara, at which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations provided briefings. Council members also held a closed videoconference with countries contributing troops and police to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) pursuant to resolution 1353 (2001). In addition, Council members held informal consultations of the whole to discuss the situation concerning Western Sahara.

On 30 October 2020, the Council adopted resolution 2548 (2020), extending the mandate of MINURSO for a period of one year, until 31 October 2021. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions. By the resolution, the Council looked forward to the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara at the earliest opportunity. The Council also emphasized the need to achieve a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution to the question of Western Sahara and expressed its full support for the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to sustain the renewed negotiations process, welcoming the commitment of Morocco, the Frente Polisario, Algeria, and

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3 For information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.
4 See A/75/2, part II, chap. 3. The closed videoconferences were held on 9 April and 21 December 2020 respectively. For further information, see S/2020/558.
5 The closed videoconference was held on 12 October 2020 in connection with the item entitled “Meeting of the Security Council with the troop-and police-contributing countries pursuant to resolution 1353 (2001), annex II, sections A and B”; see A/75/2, part II, chap 22.
6 See A/75/2, part II, chap. 3.
7 Resolution 2548 (2020), para. 1. For further information on the mandate of MINURSO, see part X, sect. I.
8 See S/2020/1063.
9 Resolution 2548 (2020), fourth preambular paragraph.
Mauritania to remain engaged. In that connection, the Council called upon the parties to resume negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General without preconditions and in good faith, taking into account the efforts made since 2006 and subsequent developments with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Nine Council members submitted written statements providing explanations of their votes on resolution 2548 (2020). According to the statement submitted by the Russian Federation, the abstention from the vote was due to the fact that the process of elaborating and endorsing the document had been neither transparent nor consultative. The statement underscored that none of the delegation’s principled and well-substantiated considerations, including those of a compromise nature had been taken into account, and a whole range of practical proposals articulated by other Council members had also been left unanswered, resulting in an unbalanced text. The statement also raised concerns regarding the substitution of fundamental principles of the Western Saharan settlement by general remarks about the need to stick to realistic approaches and seek compromise, which produced ambiguity, undermined trust in the Council’s work and obscured prospects for resuming the political process. According to the statement, the attempt to boost the peace process by using language that blurred previously agreed parameters of the Western Saharan settlement would rather produce the opposite result.

According to the statement submitted by South Africa, the two abstentions on the mandate renewal of MINURSO during 2019-2020 were due to the substance and working methods of the Western Sahara file. According to the statement, the Security Council working methods on the Western Sahara file had been “uniquely biased and non-transparent”. The statement mentioned that South Africa had consistently raised concerns about the “negotiating process” through the Group of Friends, which remained an obstacle to making progress since a draft text would be presented to Council members for it to be accepted as a fait accompli.

10 Ibid., paras. 2 and 3.
11 Ibid., para. 4.
According to the statement, it was the only mandate that was negotiated in that manner and was not considerate of the views of Member States, particularly of African Member States, which were excluded from the Group of Friends. The statement further submitted that there had been no real attempt to reach a compromise on the contentious paragraphs. Regarding the substance of resolution 2548 (2020), the statement raised several points. It first noted that the text did not reflect the current realities on the ground. It also submitted that the text did not adequately reflect the urgency that the United Nations find a personal envoy to resume the stalled United Nations-led political process and that the text could have been more balanced, including returning to a six-month mandate renewal cycle instead of one year, to send a positive signal to all parties. The statement also noted various concrete comments on the text of the resolution as well as the need for an explicit reference or responsibility given to MINURSO to monitor the human rights situation on the ground.14

Among the Council members voting in favour, many welcomed or expressed support for the work of MINURSO15 and stressed the need for swift appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General.16 According to the statement submitted by Indonesia, the text reflected a delicate balance, considering the sensitivity of the issue, the absence of a Personal Envoy and the lack of an active political process.17 The statement by Viet Nam stressed the importance of considering the legitimate views of concerned parties with a balanced and impartial approach.18 The statement submitted by China expressed hope for more thorough consultations on draft resolutions on mandate renewal for MINURSO in the future to make the text more balanced, achieve consensus through consultation and send a positive signal.19

At the end of the year, on 15 December 2020, the United States submitted a letter enclosing the President of the United States’ Proclamation on Recognizing the Sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco over the Western Sahara dated 10 December 2020, recognizing that the entire Western Sahara territory was part of the Kingdom of Morocco and expressing that

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., Belgium, China, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Russian Federation, South Africa, United States, Viet Nam.
16 Ibid., Belgium, China, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Russian Federation, South Africa, United States.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.

Part I – Overview of Security Council Activities in the Maintenance of International Peace and Security
Morocco’s autonomy proposal was “the only basis for a just and lasting solution to the dispute over the Western Sahara territory”.20

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**Videoconferences: The situation concerning Western Sahara**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Videoconference date</th>
<th>Videoconference record</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^a\) *In favour:* Belgium, China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States, Viet Nam; *Abstaining:* Russian Federation and South Africa.