



*African Union Commission
The Chairperson*

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Addis Ababa, 30 March 2015

Excellency,

I am writing to bring to your attention and that of the United Nations (UN) Security Council the communiqué on the situation in Western Sahara adopted by the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC), at its 496th meeting held in Addis Ababa on 27 March 2015. I am also attaching the report that I submitted to the PSC to facilitate its deliberations on this matter.

The PSC meeting was convened as a follow-up to the decisions on the situation in Western Sahara adopted in the past two years by the relevant AU policy organs. You would recall that, in my letters dated 10 April and 2 December 2013, I updated you on the AU's efforts. I would like to reiterate my appreciation for your reply of 2 May 2013 and the subsequent exchange of views I had both with you and your Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Ambassador Christopher Ross, in September 2013, on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

In adopting the attached communiqué, the PSC was guided by the need to ensure an enhanced and coordinated international engagement on the issue, with a view to facilitating the early resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara on the basis of international legality. Since the onset of the conflict, four decades ago, several initiatives have been taken in the search for a negotiated solution, first in the context of the Settlement Proposals submitted by the UN and the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU) in August 1988, and then within the framework of the successive Security Council resolutions adopted from 2007 onwards, following the submission by the two Parties, namely the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Polisario, of their respective proposals on how to end the conflict. Unfortunately, none of these initiatives has been able to break the impasse in the peace process. It is a matter of deep concern that the repeated appeals of the UN Security Council to the Parties to enter into negotiations 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, have remained unheeded. This poses a clear challenge to the authority of the Security Council.

**H.E. Ban Ki-moon,
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York**

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As a result, and while Western Sahara is, since 1963, inscribed on the list of non-self governing territories to which the landmark 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People applies, the people of the Territory have not been able to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. This prolonged stalemate in the peace process has not only generated tension in the Territory, but also adversely affected regional cooperation and integration efforts, at a time when collective action is of the essence in the face of common and increasing security threats.

It is against this background that the AU decided to step up its efforts towards overcoming the impasse in the peace process and enabling the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination. In so doing, the AU is acting not only within the framework of its responsibilities in the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, but also as a Guarantor of the OAU Peace Plan of June 1983 that served as the basis of the Settlement Proposals which, in 1988, set in motion the now-stalled peace process for Western Sahara.

In the past months, and in parallel to my efforts to interact with the Parties, my Special Envoy for Western Sahara, former President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique, has undertaken consultations with the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the Government of Spain as the former occupying power, and the UN Secretariat. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank you for the reception accorded to him when he visited the UN Secretariat in June 2014 and the productive meetings he had with both Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and your Personal Envoy Christopher Ross. In addition to the support for the efforts of the Personal Envoy, with which the AU fully associates itself, these consultations highlighted a growing frustration at the lack of progress and the urgency of renewed international engagement, particularly from the UN Security Council. We were also encouraged by the recognition of the role that the AU could play, including readiness by some international stakeholders to support any creative idea we may come up with to help move the process forward.

In this respect, the Peace and Security Council decided to establish an International Contact Group on Western Sahara. I intend to undertake consultations with relevant international stakeholders, notably the UN, on how best to operationalize the Group. I look forward to your support in this process. Furthermore, the PSC decided to re-activate the ad hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government on the conflict in Western Sahara established in July 1978, to ensure a high-level and sustained African engagement, while also agreeing to review the situation on a regular basis, at least twice a year.

I would like raise two other issues of particular concern to the AU. The first relates to the need to provide MINURSO with a human rights mandate, and in this regard the AUPSC has requested the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to take appropriate steps to ensure sustained independent and impartial monitoring of human rights. The second pertains to the illegal exploitation of Western Sahara's natural resources and the AUPSC has recommended consideration of a strategy of global boycott of products of companies involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources of Western Sahara as a way of further sustaining the attention of the international



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community on the situation in Western Sahara. The observations and recommendations contained in your 10 April 2014 report also remain of particular relevance.

In the weeks and months ahead, the Commission will spare no efforts in ensuring the effective follow-up of all aspects of the PSC communiqué. This will include renewed contacts with both the Parties and the relevant international stakeholders. In so doing, our objective is to actively assist the UN in its ongoing efforts to overcome the impasse in the peace process and ensure the implementation of its resolutions on the matter, to enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination. Allow me in this respect to echo the PSC communiqué by welcoming your sustained efforts and those of your Personal Envoy. I am also appreciative of the UN Security Councils continued attention to the conflict in Western Sahara. I have no doubt that through our collective and renewed efforts, we can resolve this conflict, thus ending the long suffering of the Saharawi people and creating conditions conducive to the relaunching of the integration agenda, to the benefit of the peoples of the region and Africa as a whole, but also to the benefit of the larger international community.

I would be most grateful if you could share this letter and the accompanying communiqué and report with the President of the Security Council, to be circulated as official documents of the Council, as well as with the General Assembly. Your assistance in ensuring that AU Special Envoy Joachim Chissano is given the opportunity to address the Security Council during its April 2015 meeting on Western Sahara will also be highly appreciated.

Please accept, Mr. Secretary-General, the assurances of my highest consideration.

N. Zuma
Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma (Dr.)
CHAIRPERSON
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