

**37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Item 2 – Interactive Dialogue**  
**Annual Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**  
**Statement by a cross-regional group of 15 states<sup>1</sup>**  
**8 March 2018**

Mr. President,

High-Commissioner,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of 15 states.

High-Commissioner,

The human rights of the Sahrawi people and the humanitarian situation in the occupied territory of Western Sahara remains of deep concern.

More than 50 years after the General Assembly called for a referendum with a view to enabling the indigenous population of the Territory to exercise freely its right to self-determination, the Sahrawi people still live under the foreign occupation of the Kingdom of Morocco. This occupation seriously affects the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of the Sahrawi people, as well as their right to development.

Concerned about this situation and in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly, UNGA resolution 48/141, we call upon you, yet again, High-Commissioner:

- to resume the visits by the technical mission to Western Sahara initiated in 2015, which were supposed to take place every six months;
- to establish and implement a dedicated support programme for the Sahrawi National Commission for Human Rights, which is the only National Human Rights Institution legally competent in Western Sahara, and for the Sahrawi NGOs duly accredited by the Polisario Front, the only representative of the people of Western Sahara recognized by the UN General Assembly;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Algeria – Angola – Bolivia – Cuba – Ecuador – Mozambique – Namibia – Nicaragua – Nigeria – South Africa – Tanzania – Timor-Leste – Uganda – Venezuela – Zimbabwe

<sup>2</sup> UNGA Res. 34/37

- to include an assessment of the human rights situation in Western Sahara in both his annual report to the council and his oral updates at the sessions of the Council.

We recall to your staff and Special Procedures mandate holders the international legal status of Western Sahara, as a Non Self-Governing Territory, and the legal consequences for every actor when approaching the Human Rights situation in the Non Self-Governing Territory.

Finally, High-Commissioner, we again urge you to visit Western Sahara, both sides of the Berm, before the end of your mandate and to report to the Council on the Human Rights situation.

We strongly call to broadening the mandate of the MINURSO to include a Human Rights component as it is the case in all other peacekeeping missions.

I thank you for your attention.