

38th session UN Human Rights Council

Item 10 – Technical assistance and capacity building

General debate

Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of 16 states¹.

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

In the section dedicated to “Human Rights” of his latest report to the Security Council², the UN Secretary-General stressed that “torture and ill-treatment in places of deprivation of liberty, including owing to overcrowding and limited or no access to medical care, continued to be reported....” He also stressed that the “alleged harassment by the Moroccan authorities of Saharan human rights defenders also remains of serious concern...”

The humanitarian situation in the refugees’ camps is equally of deep concern. At the same time, we note that the UN Secretary-General also highlighted that “the situation of the Sahrawi refugees raises multiple human rights concerns, many linked to the non-realization of the right to self-determination, such as the dire humanitarian situation they face, coupled with the lack of access to natural wealth and resources in Western Sahara west of the berm.”

The Secretary-General further observed that “the few local human rights groups that exist in the refugee camps reportedly continued to operate freely, without any reported impediments.” We welcome the acknowledgment by the Secretary-General that “during the reporting period, Frente Polisario expressed readiness to cooperate with United Nations human rights mechanisms.”

We note with concern that, the Polisario Front, as well as the Sahrawi National Commission for Human Rights and the Sahrawi NGOs are still waiting for a technical assistance and capacity building programme to be implemented by the OHCHR, in conformity also with ECOSOC resolution 2017/31³.

In this regard, we urge once again the OHCHR to promptly implement such a programme.

I thank you for your attention.

4th July 2018

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

² S/2018/277 (29 March 2018)

³ ECOSOC resolution 2017/31 (25 July 2017) Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations