

GENEVA SUPPORT GROUP FOR WESTERN SAHARA
STATEMENT UNDER AGENDA ITEM 2
Interactive Dialogue with the UN High-Commissioner

40TH SESSION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
07 MARCH 2019

President,

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

We are encouraged by the first face-to-face talks between the *Frente Polisario* and Kingdom of Morocco in many years held in December 2018 here in Geneva. We call on both parties to negotiate in good faith and without preconditions to enable the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to self-determination, in conformity with all relevant UN resolutions, including resolution 1514 (XV).

We remain deeply concerned at the reticence of the Office of the High Commissioner to fulfil its obligations to the Sahrawi people under numerous resolutions. While the population continues to suffer torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, harassment, arbitrary detention and the illegal exploitation of their natural resources, the Council continues to fail them.

We urge the High Commissioner to resume the technical mission to Western Sahara that was last on the ground in 2015, to do so every six months, and to report the outcomes to the Council in both her annual report and oral updates; to implement a technical assistance and capacity-building programme for the *Frente Polisario* and Sahrawi National Commission for Human Rights; and to ensure that the OHCHR staff, special procedure mandate holders and Treaty Bodies respect the status of the occupied territory, and engage with the *Frente Polisario* as the sole legitimate representatives of the Sahrawi people when discharging their mandates.

In conclusion, President, we remain committed to ensuring that the Sahrawi people are liberated, and the last colonial occupation on the African continent ended in our lifetime.

I thank you.

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