

GENEVA SUPPORT GROUP FOR WESTERN SAHARA

GENERAL DEBATE AGENDA ITEM 2: ORAL UPDATE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S ANNUAL REPORT

**41st SESSION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
25 JUNE 2019**

President,

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

The Geneva Support Group for Western Sahara regrets the resignation of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy Prof. Horst Köhler, and thanks him for his efforts in organising negotiations on resolving the situation of Western Sahara.

We note with concern the recent report of the Secretary-General highlighting ongoing violations of human rights in Western Sahara, particularly harassment, arbitrary arrests, torture, prolonged solitary confinement, and medical neglect of Sahrawi prisoners.

The Secretary-General stressed that gaps in reporting on the situation of human rights in Western Sahara persist owing to the lack of access of OHCHR to the Occupied Territory. We request the High Commissioner to provide the reasons as to why her Office has been denied access. We urge the Office 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 on the human rights situation at each session of the Council.

We also call on the Council's special procedure mandate holders to visit the Occupied Territory and to fulfil their responsibility to report on human rights violations in Western Sahara.

We welcome the outcomes of the Southern African Development Community's "Solidarity Conference with Western Sahara" held on 25 and 26 March 2019 in South Africa, particularly the conference's support for the decolonisation of the occupied territory; for self-determination for Western Sahara; and for the centrality of the African Union to the resolution of the occupation.

In conclusion, President, we remain convinced that the only enduring solution is one that grants the Sahrawi people their right to decide their own future freely and democratically in a referendum on self-determination, in conformity with General Assembly Resolution 1514.

I thank you.