

# GENEVA SUPPORT GROUP FOR WESTERN SAHARA

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

### 42<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

10 SEPTEMBER 2019

President,

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

In his latest report, the Secretary-General notes 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 again call on the Office to resume the technical mission to Western Sahara; to ensure that it visits the Occupied Territory every six months; and to report on the human rights situation at each session of the Council. We also request the High Commissioner to provide the reasons as to why her Office has been denied access.

President,

This is important because of the ongoing systematic and serious violations of human rights in Western Sahara, highlighted yet again by the crackdown on Sahrawi civilians in July 2019. We support the call by Amnesty International for an impartial investigation into the use of excessive force in this case. These and other incidents illustrate why it is imperative that MINURSO be given a human rights monitoring mandate enjoyed by almost all UN peacekeeping operations.

President,

At the first World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul in 2016, the OHCHR committed to ensure accountability of perpetrators when serious violations of international humanitarian law have taken place. We call on the Office to fulfil these commitments to the 173,600 Sahrawis in the refugee camps; to the families of the more than 600 Sahrawis still unaccounted for as enforced disappearances; to the Sahrawis detained in Moroccan prisons hundreds of kilometres from their families, some of whom are denied visits from relatives and medical care, and are subjected to torture; and to all Sahrawi victims of the Moroccan military occupation.

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*