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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF  
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

Question of Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General

1. At its forty-first session, on 31 October 1986, the General Assembly adopted resolution 41/16, which reads as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Having considered in depth the question of Western Sahara,

"Recalling the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, containing the Declaration of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples,

"Recalling its resolution 40/50 of 2 December 1985 on the question of Western Sahara,

"Recalling resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) on Western Sahara, 1/ adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its nineteenth ordinary session, held at Addis Ababa from 6 to 12 June 1983,

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1/ For the text, see resolution 38/40, para. 1.

**"Taking note with appreciation of the part of the Political Declaration adopted by the Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Harare from 1 to 6 September 1986, concerning Western Sahara, 2/**

**"Having examined the relevant chapter of the report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 3/**

**"Having examined the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara, 4/**

**"Noting with appreciation the joint good offices process initiated in New York on 9 April 1986 by the current Chairman of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to implementing resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 40/50,**

**"1. Reaffirms that the question of Western Sahara is a question of decolonization which remains to be completed on the basis of the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence;**

**"2. Reaffirms also that the solution of the question of Western Sahara lies in the implementation of resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, which establishes ways and means for a just and definitive political solution to the Western Sahara conflict;**

**"3. Again requests, to that end, the two parties to the conflict, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro, to undertake direct negotiations, in the shortest possible time, with a view to bringing about a cease-fire to create the necessary conditions for a peaceful and fair referendum for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, a referendum without any administrative or military constraints, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations;**

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**2/** See A/41/697-S/18392, annex, sect. I, paras. 127-131.

**3/** Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 23 (A/41/23), chap. IX.

**4/** A/41/673.

"4. Welcomes the efforts of the current Chairman of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to promote a just and definitive solution of the question of Western Sahara, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 40/50;

"5. Invites the current Chairman of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue to exert every effort to persuade the two parties to the conflict, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro, to negotiate, in the shortest possible time and in conformity with resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX), General Assembly resolution 40/50 and the present resolution, the terms of a cease-fire and the modalities for organizing the said referendum;

"6. Appeals to the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro to display the political will necessary to implement resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX), General Assembly resolution 40/50 and the present resolution;

"7. Reaffirms the determination of the United Nations to co-operate fully with the Organization of African Unity with a view to implementing the relevant decisions of that organization, in particular resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX);

"8. Requests the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to continue to consider the situation in Western Sahara as a matter of priority and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-second session;

"9. Invites the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity to keep the Secretary-General of the United Nations informed of the progress achieved in the implementation of the decisions of the Organization of African Unity relating to Western Sahara;

"10. Invites the Secretary-General to follow the situation in Western Sahara closely with a view to the implementation of the present resolution and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-second session."

2. The present report, which covers the period from January to September 1987, is submitted in accordance with paragraph 10 of the above-mentioned resolution.

3. In the course of a visit to Kuwait in January 1987 in connection with the Fifth Islamic Summit Conference, the Secretary-General held informal consultations on the question of Western Sahara with His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal and former Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as well as with Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Morocco.

4. In February 1987, in the course of an official visit to Algeria, the Secretary-General met with a delegation of the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra (Frente POLISARIO), led by its Secretary-General, Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz. They discussed recent developments on the question of Western Sahara. The Secretary-General indicated his intention of resuming early contacts with His Excellency M. Sassou-Nguesso, President of the People's Republic of the Congo and current Chairman of OAU, and with the two parties to the conflict - the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO - with a view to accelerating the step-by-step process for resolving basic issues relating to arrangements for a cease-fire and the organization of a referendum, in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and OAU.

5. During the same visit, the Secretary-General also discussed the question of Western Sahara with His Excellency M. Chadli Bendjedid, President of Algeria, which Government had been invited by the Secretary-General, together with the Government of Mauritania, to follow the process of good offices, as observers. The President of Algeria assured the Secretary-General of his country's continued support and co-operation in his efforts and those of the current Chairman of OAU for a just settlement of the question of Western Sahara in keeping with OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 41/16.

6. On 5 February 1987, the Secretary-General, while in Paris, apprised President Sassou-Nguesso on his recent discussions with the parties. President Sassou-Nguesso, in turn, briefed the Secretary-General on the results of his visit to Morocco where he had met with His Majesty Hassan II, King of Morocco, and on his talks in Algeria with President Chadli Bendjedid and Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz, Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO. The Secretary-General and President Sassou-Nguesso agreed to move rapidly towards the consideration of specific issues aimed at facilitating cease-fire arrangements and the organization of a referendum of self-determination of the population of Western Sahara, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 41/16 and OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX).

7. On 17 March, the Secretary-General received at United Nations Headquarters Ambassador Nicholas Mondjo, Special Representative of President Sassou-Nguesso, who briefed him on the discussions he also had had in Algiers and in Rabat on the question of Western Sahara following the visit of President Sassou-Nguesso to the two capitals. In the course of the meeting, the talks focused on the plan to dispatch a technical survey mission to Western Sahara to gather the technical information and data necessary for the formulation of proposals relating to a cease-fire and the organization of a referendum without any military or administrative constraints. The Secretary-General and the Special Representative of President Sassou-Nguesso agreed to apprise the parties of the results of their discussions.

8. On 25 April, while he was in Rome the Secretary-General received Mr. Mahfoud Ali Beiba, a representative of the Frente POLISARIO, who communicated to him a reply to a letter addressed by the Secretary-General to Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz concerning the plan to dispatch a technical survey mission to the Western Sahara.

9. At a press conference held in New York on 11 June, the Secretary-General announced his intention to send Mr. Abdulrahim Abby Farah, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, to Brazzaville to brief President Sassou-Nguesso on the latest developments. Mr. Issa Diallo, Special Assistant to the Secretary-General, would accompany Mr. Farah. At the same press conference, the Secretary-General also announced that Mr. Farah's itinerary would include visits to Morocco for talks with the government authorities and later to Algeria for discussions with the representatives of the Frente POLISARIO.

10. The mission arrived in Brazzaville on 16 June and was received the following day by President Sassou-Nguesso. Mr. Farah conveyed to the President a message from the Secretary-General and briefed him on the latest contacts of the Secretary-General with the parties. Plans for the visit of the technical survey mission were also discussed as was the nature and terms of reference of that mission.

11. On 19 June, Mr. Farah was granted an audience by King Hassan II at Marrakesh. After delivering a message from the Secretary-General, Mr. Farah briefed King Hassan II on developments pertaining to the question of Western Sahara and on the decision of the current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General to dispatch a technical survey mission to the Territory. The nature and terms of reference of the technical survey mission were explained to King Hassan II. Mr. Farah made clear that the mission would be concerned solely with technical matters and would not engage in any political activities. The information collected by the mission would assist the Secretary-General and the current Chairman of OAU in formulating proposals on questions relating to a cease-fire and a referendum. Such proposals would be submitted for the consideration of the two parties. King Hassan II stated that his Government would have no objection to the visit of the mission and offered his Government's co-operation. The Head of State reaffirmed that Morocco would stand by the results of a referendum organized and conducted in the Territory by the United Nations.

12. From Morocco, the mission proceeded to Tindouf, Algeria, where it arrived on 20 June. The following day, members of the mission met with the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO and were taken on a visit to various refugee camps. On 22 June, the mission was received by the Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO.

13. A detailed exchange of views took place on 22 June with Mr. Abdelaziz on various aspects of the question of Western Sahara, including, in particular, the intention to dispatch a technical survey mission to the Territory. Mr. Abdelaziz expressed strong reservations concerning the proposed visit at the present stage and stated his apprehension that the mission might be diverted from the accomplishment of its original goals. He stressed that Morocco still refused to accept OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 41/16 as a basis for a solution and charged that Morocco was currently expanding its occupation of the Territory while reinforcing its human and military presence. That was why his Movement felt that it would be more appropriate to dispatch the mission after the parties signed an agreement of principles that would serve as a basis for the establishment of a cease-fire and the organization of a referendum. The representatives of the Frente POLISARIO emphasized the need for the withdrawal

of the Moroccan troops and administration from the Western Sahara, as a precondition to the organization of the referendum.

14. Mr. Farah informed the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO that the mission would concern itself solely with technical matters and, consequently, that it would not engage in any political discussions with the local authorities or the inhabitants of the Territory. The information and data gathered would enable the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the current Chairman of OAU to formulate specific proposals concerning the establishment of a cease-fire and the organization of a referendum without any military or administration constraints. Such proposals would be presented at a later stage for the consideration of the parties.

15. From Tindouf, the mission went to Algiers where it was kindly received by President Chadli Bendjedid. Present at the meeting was Mr. Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria. A message from the Secretary-General was delivered by Mr. Farah to the Head of State. President Chadli Bendjedid reiterated the confidence and full support of his Government to the efforts of the current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General within the framework of OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 41/16. Mr. Farah took the opportunity to review the outcome of his talks with the parties and described the nature and objective of the technical survey mission to the Territory.

16. From Algeria, the mission flew to Geneva on 23 June to report to the Secretary-General on the outcome of the talks in the countries it had visited.

17. On 9 and 10 July, the current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General met at Geneva to review the progress achieved, to consult further with the parties concerned and to clarify the objectives and the terms of reference of the technical survey mission. They received Mr. Ould Salok, Special Envoy of the Frente POLISARIO, and the following day met with Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Morocco. The current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General also briefed the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria and the Special Envoy of the President of Mauritania, in their capacity of observers to the talks.

18. During these meetings with the two parties to the conflict, the Secretary-General and the current Chairman of OAU explained that additional technical information was needed to supplement the substantial amount of information that had been supplied by the parties in their written and oral communications. Since the technical information could be obtained only by a visit to the Territory, it would be necessary to send a technical mission to gather it. Once the information was gathered, the Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General would be in a position to formulate their proposals on questions relating to a cease-fire and a referendum, which they would, thereafter, submit for the consideration of the parties. The technical information would be used by the Secretary-General and the Chairman of OAU for the sole objective of promoting further discussions with the parties.

19. The representatives of the Frente POLISARIO, although not opposed to the principle of sending a technical survey mission to the Territory, reiterated the position that such a mission should be dispatched only after the parties had concluded an agreement which took into account the request of the Frente POLISARIO for the withdrawal of Moroccan troops and administration from Western Sahara. The Secretary-General and the Chairman of OAU, while taking note of the views and reservations of the Frente POLISARIO, asked the latter nevertheless to assist the mission and lend its full support and co-operation while it was carrying out its task.

20. The forty-sixth session of the Council of Ministers of OAU and the twenty-third session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU, at Addis Ababa in July 1987, provided further opportunities for the Secretary-General to exchange views with a number of African leaders on the question of Western Sahara. Thus, he met with President Sasseou-Nguesso, outgoing Chairman of OAU, Mr. Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia and incoming Chairman of OAU, President Chadli Bendjedid of Algeria, Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz, Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO, and Mr. Idé Oumarou, the Secretary-General of OAU.

21. On 18 September 1987, the Secretary-General met with Ambassador Peter Zuzo, Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations and Personal Representative of the current Chairman of OAU, who handed over to him a message from President Kaunda.

22. On 24 September 1987, the Secretary-General, in consultation with the current Chairman of OAU, made public the decision to send a technical survey mission to Western Sahara in the coming weeks.

23. On 25 September 1987, the Secretary-General received Mr. Omar Mansour, member of the Political Bureau of the Frente POLISARIO, who conveyed to him a message from Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz. In his message, Mr. Abdelaziz assured the current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General of the co-operation of his Movement in order to ensure the success of the technical survey mission and of their good offices.

24. In addition to the extensive above-mentioned contacts, the period under review has also witnessed continuing contacts with the parties at United Nations Headquarters. These contacts have been complemented, in many cases, by written and oral communications between the Secretary-General and the parties concerned.

#### CONCLUSION

25. The current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General are satisfied with regard to the co-operation and trust manifested by the parties in their efforts and by the progress achieved so far.

26. In his discussion with King Hassan II and with his representatives, the Secretary-General has been assured of Morocco's full co-operation and support in his efforts. On more than one occasion King Hassan II has clearly indicated that

his country was fully prepared to see the United Nations entrusted with the responsibility for the organization and conduct of a referendum in the Territory through which the inhabitants could express their right to self-determination. Moreover, King Hassan II has given assurances that any proposals the Secretary-General might wish to submit to Morocco concerning cease-fire arrangements and the modalities for the implementation of the referendum would receive serious consideration. Equally important is the commitment by Morocco to abide by the outcome of any referendum held in the Territory which is organized and conducted by the United Nations.

27. The representatives of the Frente POLISARIO reaffirmed their willingness to contribute to the success of the good offices of the current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General. They, however, expressed the view that the best way to achieve a peaceful settlement of the question of Western Sahara was through direct talks between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, in conformity with OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 41/16. The Frente POLISARIO stated that the rejection by Morocco of direct talks reinforced its position that OAU and the United Nations should take charge of the Territory of Western Sahara and obtain the withdrawal of Moroccan troops and administration.

28. The current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General have given the views of the two parties careful consideration. Since the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 41/16, the negotiating process embarked upon by the Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General had produced important information essential for a clear understanding of the positions of the two parties on vital aspects of the problem. Talks with the parties have been frank and encouraging. Nevertheless, the beginning of 1987 witnessed a rise in tension in the area due to renewed military activities. The parties should realize that the problem of Western Sahara cannot be resolved through military means, but only through a negotiated settlement in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the wishes of the people of the Territory. The Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General urge the two parties to refrain from any action which would be contrary to the achievement of that objective.

29. The proposals that the current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General intend to formulate, once they have collected and analysed all pertinent information, will be presented to the parties as a basis for negotiation. There is every hope that progress towards the desired objective can be achieved, namely, the organization and conduct of a credible referendum by the United Nations, in co-operation with OAU, through which the people of Western Sahara can freely exercise their right to self-determination, without any military or administrative constraints.

30. The responsibility for the attainment of this objective rests not only on the parties concerned, but more than ever on the support and co-operation that all Member States must lend to this initiative, the ultimate benefit of which would enhance the prospects for peace and stability in the region. The current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General firmly believe that if the parties continue to display political determination as well as the necessary flexibility, they will facilitate the formulation of proposals to be presented to the parties as a basis for negotiating an agreement for a peaceful and just solution to the question of Western Sahara.