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NOTE VERBALE DATED 14 JUNE 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF GHANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations and has the honour to forward herewith, for the attention of the President of the Security Council, a letter addressed to him by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana and Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the situation in Western Sahara.

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana would be grateful for the publication of this note and its attachment as a document of the Security Council.

Annex

Letter dated 11 June 1996 from the President of the
Republic of Ghana addressed to the President of the
Security Council

We in the West Africa subregion have been following with keen interest the daunting tasks the United Nations has faced in its attempt to help resolve the Western Sahara issue. Our interest in the ongoing conflict in Western Sahara is sustained by the fact that territory remains the last vestige of colonialism on the African continent. The Western Sahara issue also underscores the abhorrence we hold for an African country that attempts to colonize another African country.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) like the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is aware of the tremendous efforts the United Nations body put into the negotiations which led to the drawing up of the United Nations peace plan for Western Sahara. ECOWAS has always expressed its support for the United Nations peace plan and has always urged the full implementation of the peace plan. In this regard, we are conscious of the intense involvement of the Security Council in the peace process in the Western Sahara.

I am moved by the latest developments in the implementation of the United Nations peace plan in Western Sahara to transmit to you the concerns of our subregional organization on the difficulties placed in the path of the United Nations during the identification of potential voters in Western Sahara. We are acutely aware that the persistent frustrations the United Nations has faced in its work in Western Sahara have led to the declaration by the United Nations Secretary-General to suspend temporarily the United Nations involvement in the peace process in Western Sahara.

On behalf of ECOWAS I strongly appeal to you to revive the United Nations involvement in Western Sahara. Just as the United Nations has urged ECOWAS not to relent in its determination to bring permanent and durable peace to war-torn Liberia, so do we fervently urge the United Nations to reconsider its latest decision on Western Sahara. For the sake of the hundreds of innocent men, women and children who could lose their lives if the cease-fire in the Spanish Sahara were to be broken, we appeal to you to have the United Nations resume, without any further delay, its involvement in the identification process.

The United Nations must encourage the Polisario authorities and the Moroccan Government to engage in direct dialogue in a determined effort to break the impasse that currently grips the peace process in Western Sahara. The United Nations is eminently qualified to undertake that assignment and must not relinquish its responsibilities to the people of Western Sahara who yearn for an early referendum to settle the long-drawn-out dispute. Without the United Nations active involvement in Western Sahara, that territory's future will be bleak and Africa would again suffer a great set-back in trying to rid itself of another conflict.

ECOWAS, like OAU, is steadfastly committed in its support for the United Nations intervention in Western Sahara. ECOWAS upholds the United Nations peace plan as the best framework within which the Western Sahara issue could be peacefully settled.

(Signed) Jerry John RAWLINGS
President of the Republic of Ghana
and Chairman of ECOWAS
