



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

*Provisional*

## 9460<sup>th</sup>

meeting

Monday, 30 October 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

---

<i>President:</i>	Mr. França Danese. . . . .	(Brazil)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
	China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Pérez Loose
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
	Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
	Japan . . . . .	Mr. Ishikane
	Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Kumanga
	Russian Federation. . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America. . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## Agenda

The situation concerning Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara  
(S/2023/729)

---

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0601 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation concerning Western Sahara**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2023/729)**

**The President:** The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/802, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2023/729, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

#### *In favour:*

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

#### *Against:*

None

#### *Abstaining:*

Mozambique, Russian Federation

**The President:** The draft resolution received 13 votes in favour, none against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2703 (2023).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): The United States is pleased to see the Security Council reaffirm its support for the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and for United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alexander Ivanko, with the adoption of resolution 2703 (2023). Today the

Council sent a clear message that we must intensify efforts to advance an enduring and dignified resolution for Western Sahara without further delay. Although this resolution received widespread support, we regret that the Council was not unanimous in renewing the mandate, as unity greatly enhances United Nations efforts to achieve peace.

The United States strongly supports Personal Envoy de Mistura and his efforts to advance the political process. In adopting this resolution, members of the Council underscored the urgent need for a successful political process. We again call on all parties to engage with the Personal Envoy in good faith and to work towards a sustainable political solution. A political solution is critical to promoting a peaceful and prosperous future for the people of Western Sahara and the region, and the United States continues to view Morocco's autonomy plan as serious, credible, realistic and one potential approach to satisfying those aspirations.

By renewing the mandate, the Council has also affirmed the critical role of MINURSO, which works to de-escalate tensions, monitor and report on the situation on the ground and foster the conditions for the political process to advance. We welcome the progress made by MINURSO in the resupply of its team sites to sustain those crucial operations. The continuation of safe and regular resupply operations and continued respect for MINURSO's freedom of movement are vital.

We remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian conditions in Tindouf. The poor living standards, threats to food security and lack of access to basic services require a collective response. The United States, as the largest donor to the humanitarian response, is committed to doing our part. But we must all step up. People across Western Sahara and the region are counting on us. Today was a positive step, but we must continue to push progress forward.

**Mr. Kumanga** (Mozambique): Mozambique thanks the penholder for its efforts. We wish to express our strong support for the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. In the same vein, we reiterate our support for the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Mozambique approached the consultation process on the drafting of resolution 2703 (2023) in an open and constructive manner, fully conscious and aware of the mandate of MINURSO as adopted by the Security

Council. We therefore expressed our readiness to engage in the negotiation process in good faith, with the legitimate purpose of assisting MINURSO to return to its core objectives of implementing a referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara as provided by resolution 690 (1991) and subsequent decisions by the Council.

It is our conviction that the resolution just adopted, in its current form, will not assist the parties in achieving a just, lasting and mutually accepted political solution, as originally intended. To the contrary, it heralds a gradual shift away from the mandate and only postpones addressing core issues that need to be dealt with. We support all efforts aimed at a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with resolutions 690 (1991), 1754 (2007), 2414 (2018), 2468 (2019), 2494 (2019), 2548 (2020), 2602 (2021) and 2654 (2022).

Our position is anchored in the Charter of the United Nations, which holds that all people have an unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. That principle was further espoused by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), of 1960. As a country that was born from the difficult exercise of that very right for ourselves, we hold that to be not only a moral right but also a right policy with a strong legal basis. We reaffirm our commitment to making every effort to help the parties to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution based on compromise. But that has to be based on genuine efforts and with respect to every member's constructive proposal. We reiterate our call to the parties to engage in good faith with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to achieve the long-delayed exercise of the right to self-determination by the people of Western Sahara.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation abstained in the voting on resolution 2703 (2023), prepared by the United States on the extension of the mandate the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) because not a single one of our principled and properly substantiated comments, including those of a compromise nature, which we have conveyed to the American authors for several years now, was taken into account.

For that reason, the resolution presented today does not reflect the real situation on the ground that

has taken shape in the Western Sahara settlement process, and it will hardly contribute to the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to resume a direct negotiation process between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to achieve mutually acceptable solution.

Since 2018, resolutions extending the MINURSO mandate have been amended in ways that, as we see it, undermine the impartial and non-partisan approach to the problem of Western Sahara. Vague wording has emerged, which raises questions, as well as wording that determines the direct parties to the conflict in the Western Sahara settlement process. We consider numerous references to the no-longer relevant round table format, which limits the mediation work of the Personal Envoy, to be inappropriate. We did not agree with that approach in the past, and we cannot support it today.

In that regard, we would like to reaffirm our consistent position on the Western Sahara settlement process. We are in favour of a balanced and unbiased stance. We support the efforts of the Personal Envoy to organize direct negotiations between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. In this vein, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a participant in the Group of Friends of Western Sahara, we continue our active contacts with all interested parties. We work with Moroccans, the Frente POLISARIO, the Algerians and the Mauriticians.

We call on all parties to refrain from unilateral actions that could complicate a resumption of substantive political dialogue. The final settlement formula should be based on mutually acceptable solutions that would facilitate a just political settlement of the situation surrounding Western Sahara that suits both the Moroccans and the Frente POLISARIO and stipulates self-determination for the people of Western Sahara within the framework of procedures consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that our position today reflects solely an assessment of the unscrupulous work of the penholder on the resolution presented today. Once again, very serious doubts about the impartial work of Security Council penholders in fulfilling their obligations are being borne out.

At the same time, we consistently support the United Nations Mission in Western Sahara, which plays

a key stabilizing role to create conducive conditions on the ground for the resumption of dialogue between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO and advancing the peace process, including the Mission's Head, Mr. Alexander Ivanko.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China): Over the years, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has diligently fulfilled its Council mandate and made positive contributions to maintaining stability in Western Sahara and promoting a political settlement. Resolution 2703 (2023), just adopted, shows the Council's determination to support the Mission in the performance of its duties and to politically resolve the question of Western Sahara. China is pleased to see the positive progress made in MINURSO's logistical support and hopes that relevant parties will continue to strengthen communication and cooperation with the Mission in accordance with Council resolutions to enable the Mission to deliver on its mandate.

China's position on the question of Western Sahara is consistent and clear. China supports a just and lasting solution acceptable to all parties, reached through consultations among parties as equals on the basis of the relevant Council resolutions. China supports the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General in continuing to step up mediation efforts for further progress in the political process on the basis of an in-depth understanding of the concerns of the parties.

It is China's hope that future Council discussions on the resolutions on MINURSO's mandate can reflect the latest changes in the situation. We also hope that the penholder can facilitate full Council consultations to garner broader consensus.

**Mr. De Rivi re** (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the adoption of resolution 2703 (2023), which renews for one year the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). I would like to recall France's full support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. His recent visit to the region and the consultations he held there are positive developments. I also welcome MINURSO's work, which plays a key role in ensuring the stability of the region and contributes to creating the conditions necessary for a resumption of the political process.

We welcome the resumption, in September, of resupply operations at MINURSO observation sites east of the Berm. A full resumption remains necessary

to ensure regular resupply. It is also essential to ensure MINURSO's freedom of movement. France expresses its concerns with regard to violations of the ceasefire. We call on those responsible for such violations to fully implement the ceasefire agreement so as to facilitate the pursuit of the political process.

France advocates for a fair, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution in line with the resolutions of the Security Council. I recall France's historic, steadfast, clear and ongoing support for the Moroccan autonomy plan, which has been on the table since 2007. It is now time to move forward. Against that backdrop, France encourages all the parties to commit themselves to a pragmatic, realistic and durable solution based on compromise. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy aimed at the reactivation of the round tables.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Gabon voted in favour of the one-year renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), as a reflection of my country's support for the political process aimed at arriving at a pragmatic, realistic, achievable and lasting compromise-based political solution to the situation concerning Western Sahara. As we pointed out during the negotiations, a balanced resolution that takes into account the efforts of all the parties will make it possible to support the efforts of Personal Envoy Staffan de Mistura with a view to relaunching the political process among the various parties. The Personal Envoy's initiative should be built upon via the resumption of the round table process, with the participation of all stakeholders.

Gabon's vote in favour also reflects our support for the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which puts forward credible and reassuring elements that would allow not only for ending the current impact, but also for reaching a fair, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

Lastly, we encourage the Kingdom of Morocco to pursue its efforts towards maintaining the ceasefire and bolstering its cooperation with MINURSO. We call on all the other parties to do likewise, in the interest of security and stability throughout the region.

**Mr. Abushahab** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the United Arab Emirates welcomes today's adoption of resolution 2703 (2023), which extends the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) by one year. We thank the United States, as penholder,

as well as the members of the Security Council for engaging positively during the consultations.

The United Arab Emirates voted in favour of the resolution because of its balanced and comprehensive text, which takes into account the relevant important developments that have taken place since last year, including the informal consultations carried out by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. Today's resolution illustrates the Council's continued support for MINURSO and the efforts of the Personal Envoy to make progress in the political process sponsored by the United Nations.

Given that this is the last scheduled meeting on this issue during the United Arab Emirates mandate on the Security Council, I would like to underscore the following three points.

First, we must continue to support the efforts of the Special Envoy to pave the way for the re-launching of negotiations. We believe that the round table format, with the participation of all parties, will help break the political impasse. In that regard, we emphasize that the autonomy initiative put forward by the Kingdom of Morocco, which Security Council resolutions have

referred to since 2007 as serious and credible, is the only way to reach an agreed, fair, lasting and pragmatic political solution.

Secondly, enabling MINURSO to sustainably resupply its sites — and not just on an exceptional basis — is essential to allow the Mission to carry out its mandate effectively. In that regard, we commend the cooperation between the Kingdom of Morocco and MINURSO as well as its commitment to ceasefire. We believe that the Frente POLISARIO should fully cooperate with MINURSO and remove all impediments that could impact the Mission's work, as well as to commit once again to the ceasefire.

Thirdly and lastly, the United Arab Emirates underscores its steadfast support for the Kingdom of Morocco's sovereignty over the entire Moroccan Sahara, and we stress its territorial integrity. We look forward to the continued constructive efforts of the United Nations to reach a solution to this decades-old situation. That would contribute to strengthening security and stability in a region that suffers multiple challenges.

*The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.*