

# South Africa calls on the UN Decolonisation Committee to send a visiting Mission to Western Sahara and protect Saharawi rights

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**New York (United Nations) 15 June 2021 (SPS)-** South African Permanent representative to the UN, Amp. Machu Joyini, called on the UN Committee on Decolonisation (C-24) to dispatch a visiting Mission to the Western Sahara in order to assess the situation, stressing on the need for the protection of Saharawi people's rights, in his statement before the Committee yesterday.

"South Africa urges the Special Committee on Decolonisation to send a visiting mission to Western Sahara to obtain first-hand information on the general situation in the Territory. It is regrettable that the only visiting mission of the Committee to the Territory of Western Sahara was undertaken in 1975. We cannot continue to witness the perpetual denial of the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara without concrete steps being taken by the Committee towards a lasting, peaceful, and mutually acceptable solution," he emphasized.

following is the full statement of the South African Representative delivered yesterday before the Committee:

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## **STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MATHU JOYINI PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE MEETING OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONISATION**

### **(C-24) AGENDA ITEM: QUESTION OF WESTERN SAHARA**

**14 JUNE 2021**

Chairperson, my delegation is grateful for your able leadership of this Committee and we thank you for keeping the decolonization agenda of the United Nations on track amidst the unprecedented times occasioned by Covid-19 global pandemic.

Chairperson,

Western Sahara has been on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since December 1963. Since then, the UN General Assembly resolutions have been calling for the enabling of the people of Western Sahara to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions. However, we regret to note that almost five decades later, a full measure of self-government for the people of Western Sahara has not been attained.

Chairperson,

South Africa is deeply concerned about the rising tensions during November and December 2020 in the disputed territory of Western Sahara which pose further challenges to the objectives of this Committee. The breach of the 1991 ceasefire agreement by the Occupying Power, the Kingdom of Morocco, which saw the resumption of hostilities between the parties, as well as unilateral announcements by member states, which are contrary to the legal status of the territory, are of grave concern to us. These negative developments may pose serious consequences for peace, security, and stability for the region.

Chairperson,

The Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO must continue to abide by the terms of the ceasefire agreements, particularly the Military Agreement No 1, and to avoid any acts that could lead to a further rise in tensions and possible hostilities in the territory. We further call on full implementation of all UN Security Council resolutions as well as those of the African Union including their decisions, which are aimed at finding a solution.

In the same vein, we urge the UN Secretary-General to swiftly appoint a Personal Envoy for Western Sahara who can engage with the parties and provide the necessary momentum to revive and spearhead the stagnant political process. The delay in the appointment of an envoy and the resultant stagnation of the peace process will surely exacerbate the political and security situation.

Chairperson,

South Africa reaffirms the United Nations legal framework on the decolonisation of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara.

In this regard, the long-awaited referendum on self-determination that has been expected since the creation of MINURSO 20 years ago, in 1991, should not be delayed any further, to allow the people of Western Sahara to determine their future.

We further reaffirm and support the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence in accordance with the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter and the objectives of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions. In this regard, we wish to reiterate the following recommendations:

First, we call on the Special Committee on Decolonisation to assume fully and effectively its responsibility towards the people of Western Sahara. This entails ensuring the protection of the political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the Sahrawi people, including their right to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources, and regular reporting to relevant UN bodies on the situation in the Territory.

Second, South Africa urges the Special Committee on Decolonisation to send a visiting mission to Western Sahara to obtain first-hand information on the general situation in the Territory. It is regrettable that the only visiting mission of the Committee to the Territory of Western Sahara was undertaken in 1975. We cannot continue to witness the perpetual denial of the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara without concrete steps being taken by the Committee towards a lasting, peaceful, and mutually acceptable solution.

Lastly, we urge the Special Committee on Decolonisation to actively support the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to relaunch the peace process in Western Sahara through direct and substantive negotiations between the Frente POLISARIO and the Kingdom of Morocco, and underscore that the ultimate objective of such negotiations is to allow the Saharawi people to exercise freely and democratically their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

**Chairperson**, let me conclude by highlighting that South Africa believes that any recognition of Western Sahara as part of Morocco is tantamount to recognizing illegal occupation and such recognition is a contravention of international law.

**I thank you.” (SPS)**

**090/500/60 (SPS)**