



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9168th meeting

Thursday, 27 October 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Biang. (Gabon)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
France	Mr. De Rivière
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
India	Mr. Ravindran
Ireland	Mr. Gallagher
Kenya	Mr. Kimani
Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Norway	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation concerning Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara
(S/2022/733)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.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/2022/733)

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2022/801, 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/2022/733, 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, France, Gabon, Ghana, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Kenya, Russian Federation

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 13 votes in favour, none against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2654 (2022).

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

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): The United States is pleased to see the Council reaffirm its support for the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, and for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO),

with the adoption of resolution 2654 (2022). The United States welcomes the Council's support for MINURSO's mandate. With that vote, the Council is affirming that it is fully behind the Personal Envoy in his efforts to advance an enduring and dignified resolution and facilitate a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution for Western Sahara. We regret that the Council was not unanimous in support of renewing that mandate today, as unity greatly enhances United Nations efforts to achieve peace.

We strongly support Mr. De Mistura and his efforts to advance the political process, building on the progress of the former Personal Envoy and in line with relevant precedents. We call on all concerned to engage with the Personal Envoy in good faith and expand on their positions in order to advance a sustainable solution. That political solution is vital to promoting a peaceful and prosperous future for the people of Western Sahara and the region. We continue to view Morocco's autonomy plan as serious, credible and realistic, and one potential approach to satisfying those aspirations.

By renewing MINURSO's mandate, the Council also affirms the important role played by the Mission. MINURSO's peacekeepers are tasked with monitoring and reporting on the situation on the ground, de-escalating tensions and where possible conducting dangerous mine-clearance operations. We support those peacekeepers and call for restoring their freedom of movement, as well as for resuming the safe and regular resupply of MINURSO team sites to ensure the sustainability of the Mission's presence. We share the Council's deep concern about the dire situation in the Tindouf refugee camps and urge donors to increase humanitarian contributions in response to that growing crisis.

In conclusion, I reiterate that we as Council members share the privilege and responsibility of encouraging constructive engagement, as reflected in the resolution we just adopted.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): Kenya fully supports the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and that of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy. That was reflected in our affirmative vote on resolution 2602 (2021) in October last year in our hope that the parties would engage the Personal Envoy in a way that returned MINURSO to its core objective of implementing a referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Unfortunately, progress has been limited. Resolution 2654 (2022) continues a gradual but noticeable shift away from the mandate and will not assist the parties in achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, as originally intended.

Unfortunately, the constructive proposals we made during the negotiations that speak to the core matter of the mandate were not taken on board. For that reason, we abstained in the voting. We are concerned about the fact that this resolution does not substantively reflect the Security Council's commitment — as reflected in the seventh preambular paragraph of resolution 2602 (2021) and in previous resolutions — to

“provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, and noting the role and responsibilities of the parties in this respect”.

Underlying the United Nations recognition of the right to self-determination through a properly implemented referendum is the Charter of the United Nations, which holds that all peoples shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. Equally, key to the African Union's recognition of Sahrawi and its full membership is the objective laid out in article 3 (h) of its Constitutive Act to “promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments”. Those are foundational principles for both the United Nations and the African Union. Kenya stands by them not to alienate any party but in the conviction that they will protect all parties and the region from conflict and suffering and that they are sorely needed in many regions of the world. We further observe that the African Union, which counts both parties as its members, should not be ignored by any United Nations process, if only based on adherence to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The Personal Envoy should make every effort to cooperate with the African Union to find ways to bring all parties to a common position protective of peace, security and the holding of the agreed referendum.

Kenya enjoys warm ties of friendship with both Morocco and Western Sahara. We aspire to further strengthen those ties through cooperation on matters of common interest at the bilateral and multilateral levels. We understand the complex and contentious nature of

this situation and reaffirm our commitment to making every effort to help the parties to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise. We urge all the parties to engage in good faith with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to achieve the long-delayed exercise of its right to self-determination by the people of Western Sahara.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I welcome the adoption today of resolution 2654 (2022), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for another year and reflects the Mission's critical and effective role in supporting stability in the region. We also extend our sincere thanks to the United States, in its capacity as penholder, for its tireless efforts in submitting the draft resolution contained in document S/2022/801 and facilitating the consultations that led to its adoption.

My country values the Council's constructive approach through the use of balanced language that stresses its members' support for the work of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. We commend his tireless efforts, especially his facilitation of the political process to reach a political, realistic, just, lasting, and acceptable solution based on the criteria set by the Security Council since 2007. We urge the Personal Envoy to continue to build on the progress made by his predecessor, Mr. Kohler, including the round-table process that was attended by the four participants and remains an important step towards reaching such a solution.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its full support for the Kingdom of Morocco and its sovereignty over the entire Moroccan Sahara. We also reiterate our support for the Autonomy Initiative presented by Morocco in 2007, which the Security Council has considered in its resolutions to be both serious and credible, and which also constitutes an important solution that is in line with the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's resolutions and preserves Morocco's territorial integrity.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia abstained in the voting on resolution 2654 (2022), submitted by the United States, on renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The process of preparing and agreeing on the document was not fully consultative. None of our principled and

well-grounded comments, including compromises, which we repeatedly communicated to the United States, were taken into consideration. A number of useful proposals by other Council members also went unheeded. As a result, the resolution is not balanced. That situation raises doubts, once again, with regard to the impartiality of the informal penholders of country-specific topics in the Security Council.

In the past few years, the resolutions on the renewal of MINURSO's mandate have included amendments that in our view harm the unbiased and impartial approach needed to resolve the issue of Western Sahara. We disagreed with that iteration of the resolution in the past, and we could not vote in favour of it today.

The resolution adopted today does not reflect the real situation on the ground with regard to the settlement of the Western Sahara issue and is unlikely to facilitate the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to resume the direct negotiation process between Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) in order to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

We question the vague language used to define the direct participants in the conflict and the Western Sahara peace process. We also consider the numerous references to the round-table format, which is irrelevant and limits the mediation activities of the Personal Envoy, to be misplaced.

At the same time, the text of the resolution does not reflect the continuing issue of access by United Nations entities to the territory of Western Sahara in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the civilian population there.

In that regard, we would like to reaffirm our consistent position on the settlement of the Western Sahara issue. We advocate for a balanced and impartial approach, and we support the efforts of the Personal Envoy to organize direct negotiations between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. In that context, and as a permanent member of the Security Council and a member of the Group of Friends of Western Sahara, we continue to maintain active contact with all interested parties. We are working with Morocco, the Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania.

We call on all parties to refrain from unilateral actions that could complicate the resumption of a

substantive political dialogue. The formula for a final settlement should be based on mutually acceptable outcomes that will contribute to a fair political resolution of the situation in Western Sahara for both Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. It should also provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the framework of procedures that are consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that our position with respect to the voting is due solely to our disagreement with the wording of the resolution, which I mentioned earlier, and rather reflects the assessment of the work of the penholder. Nevertheless, we reiterate our consistent support for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and its Head, Mr. Alexander Ivanko. The Mission plays a key stabilizing role in terms of creating favourable conditions on the ground for the resumption of dialogue between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO in order to advance the peace process.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) diligently implements the mandate bestowed upon it by the Security Council and therefore makes a positive contribution to efforts to achieve a political solution to the question of Western Sahara and the maintenance of overall stability in the region. We appreciate the efforts made by peacekeepers there and support the extension of the Mission's mandate.

The Security Council has just adopted resolution 2654 (2022), which extends the Mission's mandate for 12 months, thereby demonstrating its determination to uphold the Mission's mandate and promote a political solution to the question of Western Sahara. China hopes that future Council resolutions on the extension of the mandate of MINURSO can reflect the latest changes in the situation, based on in-depth consultations, so as to arrive at a text that is acceptable to the relevant parties.

I wish to reiterate that China's position on the question of Western Sahara has been consistently clear. We are in favour of handling the situation on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions so that, based on the good offices of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy and consultations between the parties on an equal footing, a just, durable and mutually acceptable solution can ultimately be reached.

We hope that consensus can be achieved at an early date on the next steps in the political process of the question of Western Sahara. China will continue to maintain an objective and impartial position and to support the efforts of the United Nations and the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to promote a political solution to the question of Western Sahara.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Brazil thanks the United States for its dedication as penholder of the Western Sahara file and for facilitating the negotiations on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

I commend the Council on securing yet another extension for the crucial operations carried out by MINURSO on the ground and once again express Brazil's unwavering support for the Mission's duties and responsibilities in favour of peace and stability for the territory.

At the same time, I cannot but notice that this year's text, notwithstanding its many virtues, could have greatly benefited from a more balanced approach with regard to some of its innovative propositions. Something as simple as incorporating original formulas, many of which are still very valid, could have proven useful in bridging some of the gaps we have seen during the recent negotiations. That could have allowed in turn for an even stronger message of support from the Council to Personal Envoy De Mistura and Special Representative Ivanko.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Brazil's steadfast commitment to a peaceful, just and mutually acceptable solution to the question of Western Sahara, under the auspices of the United Nations and in full accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Gabon.

Gabon voted in favour of the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. Our vote is an expression of Gabon's support for the political process, aimed at reaching a realistic, feasible and lasting political solution to the various problems facing Western Sahara. We are convinced that the resolution just adopted (resolution 2654 (2022)) will further facilitate support for the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, aimed at relaunching the political process with the various stakeholders.

Gabon's vote reflects, above all, our support for Morocco's autonomy plan, which presents credible and reassuring prospects that allow not only for a way out of the current impasse but also for a mutually acceptable political solution to be reached.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.