

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
16 September 2019

Original: English

Letter dated 13 September 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex, a letter from Brahim Ghali, the Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO, to Vassily A. Nebenzia, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations and President of the Security Council, regarding the latest developments in the question of Western Sahara, issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Neville **Gertze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 13 September 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Three months have now passed since the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Horst Köhler, abruptly resigned. Little has been done in the ensuing period to advance the United Nations peace process on Western Sahara. The delay in appointing a new Personal Envoy has all but paralysed the political process. The United Nations-led peace process appears to have returned to “business as usual”, despite Security Council members’ repeated assurances to the contrary.

Political progress has stalled in spite of the tremendous concessions and sacrifices that we have made explicitly to help the United Nations Personal Envoy succeed in his mission and to create a propitious climate for advancing the United Nations peace process. Despite attempts in some quarters to deviate from the parameters agreed by the Security Council in relation to the question of Western Sahara, and despite Morocco’s intransigence and provocation, we have exercised considerable restraint and have remained positively engaged in the political process.

Throughout successive rounds of United Nations Office at Geneva-sponsored talks between the two parties, we participated constructively and seriously. We put on the table practical proposals to build confidence in the negotiations and to lay the groundwork for a peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict. Regrettably, however, the inflexibility exhibited by the Moroccan delegation during and outside round-table discussions quickly undermined any prospect of building trust and making progress on the core issues.

We, the Frente POLISARIO, have consistently done our part to support the political process. Now it is time for the other party to do its part and to demonstrate a genuine will towards reaching a peaceful and enduring solution that provides for the exercise of our people’s inalienable right to self-determination through a credible, free and democratic process.

The renewal of peace talks in December 2018 created a rare source of hope among our people, who, after close to 30 years of broken promises, reluctantly believed that a genuine process of self-determination could at last be at hand. But after months of silence from Council members, no appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and no action to restart peace talks, hope has given way to frustration. We cannot understand the Security Council’s delay in fulfilling its commitment to upending the status quo and its failure to respond robustly to Morocco’s escalating and destabilizing actions, which have undermined the fragile peace forged in 1991 by the United Nations-supervised ceasefire.

We are increasingly alarmed by Morocco’s illegal actions to undermine the peace process and sow the seeds of renewed conflict. As we alerted the Security Council in our letter dated 13 August 2019 (S/2019/659), Moroccan authorities recently placed a group of security and intelligence agents in plain clothes in the buffer strip in Guerguerat, southern Western Sahara. Recent reports indicate that the Moroccan agents, who are operating under direct instructions from Moroccan authorities, are still present in the buffer strip, where they assault and terrorize Sahrawi civilians transiting the area.

The presence of Moroccan agents in the buffer strip is a clear and serious violation of the terms of military agreement No. 1. These actions run contrary to the spirit of the peace plan and they violate Security Council resolution 2468 (2019), which reaffirmed the need for full respect of the military agreements reached with the

United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) with regard to the ceasefire and called upon the parties to refrain from any actions that could undermine United Nations-facilitated negotiations or further destabilize the situation in the Western Sahara. Unless Morocco immediately removes its agents from the buffer strip, the situation in the area will escalate.

For over 40 years, our people have endured the dire consequences of Moroccan illegal occupation of our land. The fundamental right of our people to self-determination has been denied, and the basic human rights of our fellow women, men and children are being systematically violated in the Sahrawi occupied Territories. Our natural resources have been plundered. While we remain fully committed to our obligations under the ceasefire and related military agreements, we reserve our legitimate right to act in response to all hostile actions by Morocco, the occupying Power, which aim to entrench its illegal occupation of parts of our national Territory. Morocco would be making a serious mistake if it tried to test the patience of our people, who are more determined than ever to defend their rights and legitimate national aspirations.

Over the coming weeks, members of the Security Council will consider the renewal of the mandate of MINURSO. It has now been 28 years since this peacekeeping mission was deployed with the explicit mandate of holding a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. The holding of this referendum was accepted by both parties and endorsed by the Security Council. Yet no such referendum has been held because Morocco has refused to allow it. Moreover, the unacceptable long-standing restrictions imposed by Morocco on MINURSO and the latter's failure to carry out its mission in line with basic United Nations peacekeeping standards have seriously undermined the functionality of the Mission and its credibility in the eyes of our people.

The Council must not allow a return to the status quo in Western Sahara, and it must not underestimate the consequences of allowing Morocco's intransigence to go unanswered. We strongly urge the Security Council to insist that there be no further delay in appointing a new, qualified Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General who shares his predecessor's strong convictions, stature and resolve. We urge all Security Council members to redouble their commitment to the political process and to insist on the resumption of direct, substantive negotiations between the two parties, with a view to achieving a peaceful and lasting solution that fully respects the right of our people to self-determination and independence.

I should be most grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Brahim Ghali**
Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO