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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Western Sahara

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

I. Reports and good offices of the Secretary-General

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/107](#), the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session a report on the question of Western Sahara ([A/74/341](#)). The report covered the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 and contained a review of the activities carried out by the Secretary-General in the exercise of his good offices.

2. During the period under review, pursuant to Security Council resolutions [2440 \(2018\)](#) and [2468 \(2019\)](#), the Secretary-General also submitted two reports, on 1 April and 2 October 2019, to the Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara ([S/2019/282](#) and [S/2019/787](#)). The present working paper provides a summary of the aforementioned reports, with additional information regarding the consideration of that question by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

3. In its resolution [2440 \(2018\)](#), adopted on 31 October 2018, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 30 April 2019. In the same resolution, the Council expressed its full support for the intention of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to initiate a renewed negotiations process before the end of 2018, noted that invitations to an initial round-table meeting in Geneva on 5 and 6 December 2018 had been sent on 28 September 2018, welcomed that Morocco, the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), Algeria and Mauritania had responded positively and encouraged them to work constructively with the Personal Envoy, in the spirit of compromise, throughout the duration of that process to ensure a successful outcome. The Council also called upon the parties to respect their relevant obligations and assurances and refrain from any actions that could undermine United Nations-facilitated negotiations or further destabilize the situation in the Western Sahara.

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4. In his report to the Security Council dated 1 April 2019 (S/2019/282), which covered developments since his previous report dated 3 October 2018 (S/2018/889), the Secretary-General informed the Council that his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Horst Köhler, had continued to accelerate efforts to advance the negotiation process. On 5 and 6 December 2018 and on 21 and 22 March 2019, he had convened round-table meetings between Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania in Switzerland. The round-table meetings had marked the first face-to-face encounters in the context of the political process since 2012 and had been characterized by a positive spirit and a respectful and constructive atmosphere.

5. On 5 and 6 December 2018, the Personal Envoy had convened an initial round-table meeting on Western Sahara in Geneva that had been attended by representatives of Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania. The round table had been the first face-to-face meeting held in the context of the political process in six years and had been characterized by a sincere, respectful and constructive atmosphere. At the conclusion of the meeting, all of the delegations had underscored the difference in atmosphere between the Geneva round table and previous encounters, concluding that it could mark a new beginning for the political process. The delegations had issued a joint communiqué conveying their willingness to meet again in the first quarter of 2019.

6. On 11 December 2018, at a meeting with King Mohamed VI of Morocco in Rabat, the Secretary-General had expressed his gratitude for the constructive engagement of Morocco in the political process and the initial round-table meeting on Western Sahara held in December in Geneva. The King had reiterated his country's commitment to the political process and commended the Personal Envoy on having brought Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania together.

7. In a letter to the Personal Envoy dated 26 December 2018, the Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO, Brahim Ghali, had expressed concern about the current trajectory of the European Union's trade policy, warning that it could pre-empt the outcome of negotiations and negatively affect the potential for progress. On 10 February 2019, the Secretary-General had met the Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO on the margins of the thirty-second ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, in Addis Ababa. During the meeting, he had reiterated his intention to relaunch the negotiations and had asked for the support of the parties. Mr. Ghali had expressed his full support for the Personal Envoy and his mission and had confirmed the serious intention of Frente POLISARIO to support the search for a solution.

8. In accordance with paragraph 11 of Security Council resolution 2440 (2018), the Personal Envoy had briefed the Council on 29 January 2019 on the initial round-table meeting and his plans for the way forward. He had explained that a lack of trust had been the core problem in the search for a solution and had called upon the parties to demonstrate respect for one another and a willingness to compromise. He had received broad support for his efforts throughout the membership of the Council.

9. Before the second round-table meeting, the Personal Envoy had held consultations with Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania in February and March 2019. He had felt encouraged by their constructive and serious engagement and their strong commitment to intensifying discussions and establishing a negotiations process, while also taking note of serious differences of opinion on the future status of Western Sahara. However, they had agreed that the focus of the second round-table meeting should be on more substantive discussions regarding the future of Western Sahara, as well as on ways and means to increase trust in the political process and between the parties.

10. The Personal Envoy had convened the second round-table meeting near Geneva on 21 and 22 March 2019. The second meeting had followed the format established in December 2018, assembling Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania around the table. The delegations had engaged courteously and openly, in an atmosphere of mutual respect. They had welcomed the new momentum created by the first round-table meeting in December 2018. They had held in-depth discussions on how to achieve a mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara that would be realistic, practicable, enduring, based on compromise, just and lasting, which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with Security Council resolution 2440 (2018). In that regard, they had agreed to continue the discussion in order to identify elements of convergence. There had been consensus that the whole Maghreb would greatly benefit from a solution to the question of Western Sahara. The delegations had also recognized that the region had a special responsibility to contribute to a solution. They had welcomed the intention of the Personal Envoy to invite them to meet again in the same format. They had agreed that additional trust needed to be built and had committed themselves to continuing to engage in the process. The Personal Envoy had encouraged the delegations to explore good faith gestures and build more trust.

11. In his observations and recommendations, the Secretary-General stated that finding a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara would require strong political will not only from the parties and the neighbouring States but also from the international community. He therefore called upon Security Council members, friends of Western Sahara and other relevant actors to encourage Morocco and Frente POLISARIO to seize the window of opportunity presented and continue to engage in good faith and without preconditions in the round-table process launched by his Personal Envoy. He urged the parties to actively make gestures of good faith that demonstrated their willingness to make progress. With the destruction of its last remaining stockpile of landmines, Frente POLISARIO had already taken a commendable first step in that regard. The Secretary-General welcomed the agreement by the delegations to continue the political process and to convene again in the round-table format and called upon the parties to continue to search for a compromise.

12. Turning to the activities of MINURSO, the Secretary-General stated that the situation in Western Sahara had remained relatively calm. The ceasefire, notwithstanding some significant violations, had continued to hold, with both parties on the whole continuing to respect the MINURSO mandate in safeguarding the rules enshrined in military agreement No. 1 and other related agreements. When violations had been identified by the Mission, the parties had not, however, always shown a willingness to resolve them or find mitigating solutions. Both Morocco and Frente POLISARIO had attempted to justify some of their violations of military agreement No. 1 as being necessary to prevent drug trafficking and other criminal activity, although allowances had not been made in the agreement for intervention by military forces or the use of military infrastructure in such cases.

13. On 2 February 2019, a serious incident had taken place. After MINURSO military observers had left Guerguerat for the day, a young Sahrawi man had lit himself on fire inside the Moroccan gate, reportedly in protest against the Moroccan “border” authorities. He had suffered injuries that had led to his death, on 6 February. The incident had prompted an emotional outcry on social media from many in the Sahrawi community, with some of the anger directed at the United Nations and MINURSO, largely inspired by incorrect reports that MINURSO military observers had witnessed the incident first-hand and had not intervened. MINURSO had reached out through Frente POLISARIO to correct those impressions and calm the situation.

14. On 2 October 2019, the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council his report on the situation concerning Western Sahara ([S/2019/787](#)), which covered developments that had occurred since his previous report thereon, dated 1 April 2019 ([S/2019/282](#)). In that report, the Secretary-General stated that, during the period under review, the situation on the ground in Western Sahara had remained relatively calm notwithstanding some uncertainty. Overall, both parties had continued to abide by military agreement No. 1 and other related agreements, and the ceasefire between the parties had been respected. MINURSO had continued to implement its mandate to observe and report on the ceasefire, to act as an early warning mechanism and, by engaging with the parties to resolve their violations and allegations, to prevent conflict and maintain a conducive environment for the peace process. Since the report of the Secretary-General of 1 April 2019 ([S/2019/282](#)), as a result of cooperation from the Royal Moroccan Army, all four of the violations referred to in paragraphs 32 to 35 of that report, as well as a subsequent fifth violation of the same nature, had been removed (three violations) or a mitigating solution had been found that had been satisfactory to both the Royal Moroccan Army and MINURSO (two violations). No further such violations had been registered on either side of the berm.

15. The crossing between Western Sahara and Mauritania at Guerguerat, at the southern extreme of the Territory, had been a source of increased tension among traders, protestors and Moroccan customs officials. Individuals and small groups claiming to be objecting to a lack of socioeconomic opportunities or to customs policies and actions had held temporary protests on the paved portion of the road inside the buffer strip on 54 occasions since the report of the Secretary-General of 1 April 2019 for periods varying from one hour to several days. MINURSO had continued to monitor the situation in Guerguerat closely with a day patrol of United Nations military observers assigned to the area. MINURSO had informally intervened on a number of occasions to reduce tensions and restore the flow of traffic, or to assist foreign tourists stranded in the buffer strip. On 23 July, the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, Omar Hilale, had written to the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations asserting that the individuals who had been blocking the road had been smugglers posing as demonstrators. It was indicated in the letter that Morocco could no longer tolerate obstructions to the flow of civilian and commercial traffic, and the Under-Secretary-General was informed that Morocco might decide to intervene if the road blockages persisted. On 12 August, the Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO had written a letter to the Secretary-General denouncing the presence of “Moroccan agents” in the buffer strip in Guerguerat, describing it as a violation of the ceasefire and of military agreement No. 1. In the letter, Frente POLISARIO had also called for the dismantling of structures in the area and had added that it reserved the right to act in response to any act that it deemed provocative.

16. Two conferences on Western Sahara had been held in late March. On 25 March, Morocco had convened the African Ministerial Conference on the African Union’s support to the United Nations political process on the regional dispute over the Sahara in Marrakech, Morocco. The Conference had adopted a declaration welcoming and reaffirming the African Union’s support for “the exclusivity of the United Nations as the framework for seeking a mutually acceptable, realistic, pragmatic and lasting political solution to the Sahara issue” ([S/2019/351](#), annex). On 25 and 26 March, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) had convened the SADC Solidarity Conference with Western Sahara in Pretoria. The conference had issued a final declaration expressing, inter alia, “solidarity with the people of Western Sahara” and support for United Nations efforts led by the Personal Envoy, and had reiterated “the role of the African Union ... in remaining seized with the question of Western Sahara”.

17. From April to June 2019, small groups of Sahrawi civilians had protested several times a month in the refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria, against regulations adopted by Frente POLISARIO governing the border crossings from the Sahrawi refugee camps into Mauritanian territory and east of the berm. They had also called for freedom of movement and general reforms. In Rabouni, Algeria, protests had also been organized to demand that Frente POLISARIO obtain information from Algeria on the fate of Khalil Ahmed, a member of Frente POLISARIO who had been reported missing in Algeria in 2009. On 15 July, Ahmed's wife and children had begun a sit-in outside the United Nations multi-agency compound in Rabouni, and on 29 July, approximately 60 protesters had pushed their way into the compound. While there had been no explicit threat to United Nations staff, the 13 United Nations staff members and 11 staff members from international non-governmental organizations had been relocated to nearby Tindouf as a precaution. On 4 August, following negotiations with Frente POLISARIO and tribal chiefs, Ahmed's family had left, and United Nations agencies had resumed normal operations at the compound.

18. On 21 May, the Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO had written to the Secretary-General (see [S/2019/424](#), annex) to report on the "rapidly deteriorating situation" in Western Sahara, including with regard to the "proliferation" of ceasefire violations by Morocco and alleged human rights abuses. In the letter, Mr. Ghali had stated that Moroccan authorities had prevented seven independent legal observers from entering Western Sahara, thereby preventing them from observing the trial of a Sahrawi journalist, Nazha El Khalidi, who had been arrested on 4 December 2018 for having live-streamed "State-sponsored harassment of peaceful Sahrawi protesters in the occupied territories". He had also stated that Morocco had maintained its presence in Guerguerat and that hundreds of trucks and vehicles had crossed into the buffer strip every day, in violation of military agreement No. 1. On 17 September, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had received a letter from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations stating that Ms. El Khalidi had been arrested when filming a law enforcement operation with her mobile telephone without professional accreditation as a journalist and that she had left the police premises freely after being auditioned.

19. On 8 June, Frente POLISARIO had written a letter to the Security Council, the Under-Secretaries-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and for Peace Operations and MINURSO condemning the alleged excessive use of force by Moroccan security forces against young Sahrawi people in Smara, who had been reportedly celebrating the release of "political prisoner" Salah Labseer. The letter had denounced the conduct of the Moroccan police and paramilitary agents and had called for independent monitoring of human rights in the Territory. On 17 June, an estimated 70 people had rallied peacefully in Rabouni to protest the alleged human rights abuses committed by Morocco in Smara, west of the berm.

20. During the reporting period, Moroccan investments west of the berm had continued as previously reported, in particular in the city of Laayoune. Morocco maintained that such investments directly benefited the people of Western Sahara and were implemented in consultation with them. Frente POLISARIO continued to protest that the investments were in violation of international law and of the status of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

21. East of the Berm, there continued to be relatively little development, by comparison. Since the ceasefire, six small civilian settlements had been established in Bir Lahlou, Tifariti, Mehaires, Mijek, Agwanit and Dougaj. MINURSO had observed an increase in civilian activities and presence, mainly in Bir Lahlou, Mehaires and Tifariti. As a result of the local nomadic lifestyle, the populations of those villages fluctuated. Morocco considered those settlements to be illegal.

22. On 26 June, Côte d'Ivoire opened an "honorary consulate" in Laayoune, and Mohamed Imam Malainine was designated "Honorary Consul" of Côte d'Ivoire for Western Sahara. In a letter dated 3 July, Mr. Ghali wrote to the Secretary-General expressing concern over the action, which he had stated had constituted "a violation of international law and a serious breach of the international legal status of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory".

23. On the political front, at the invitation of the Personal Envoy, delegations from Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania had come together for a second round-table meeting near Geneva on 21 and 22 March 2019. In accordance with resolution 2440 (2018), the Personal Envoy had briefed the Security Council on 10 April on the outcome of the second Geneva round table. He had conveyed the parties' commitment to continuing the discussion on the question of Western Sahara in order to identify elements of convergence, with a view to achieving a mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara that was realistic, practicable, enduring, based on compromise, just and lasting, which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with resolution 2440 (2018). The Personal Envoy had also indicated that all the delegations attending the second Geneva round table in late March had welcomed his intention to invite them to meet again in the same manner.

24. On 15 April, Mr. Hilale had addressed a letter to the Personal Envoy regarding the country's position on recent developments in the political process. The letter had called for the stronger involvement of Algeria; stressed that Morocco, for its part, had submitted a proposal for autonomy; and called upon the other party to "show the same commitment and demonstrate a real desire to move towards a solution". Lastly, the letter had underlined the importance of maintaining the presence of MINURSO.

25. On 22 May 2019, the Personal Envoy had informed the Secretary-General of his decision to step down from his role for health reasons. The Secretary-General had received the news with regret and expressed gratitude for the Personal Envoy's steadfast and intensive efforts over the past two years, which had laid the foundation for new momentum in the political process.

26. With regard to the activities of MINURSO, cooperation between the Mission's team site commanders and the parties had generally been satisfactory.

27. Regarding mine action, as at 31 August, 70 known cluster strike areas and 24 known minefields had remained to be addressed east of the berm.

28. The constraints imposed by the parties, in terms of both communication with MINURSO leadership and access to interlocutors and relevant information, hindered MINURSO in the implementation of its mandate and continued to pose a challenge to the Mission's operations and security. After his meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco, Nasser Bourita, on the margins of the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General believed that progress could be achieved to overcome constraints regarding those aspects on the Moroccan side. It was also his hope that Frente POLISARIO would resume its long-standing practice of meeting MINURSO leadership in Rabouni.

29. Frente POLISARIO continued to refuse all meetings with the Mission's leadership, both civilian and military, in Rabouni, where all meetings had previously been held in accordance with long-standing practice. During the reporting period, that policy had been extended to include all MINURSO military personnel based in Laayoune. In the Tindouf area, the Mission's Liaison Office had maintained regular, but limited, communication with Frente POLISARIO, but interacted openly with civil society and other relevant interlocutors through visits to the refugee camps, other contacts and electronic means. The overall situation impeded good communication

and effective working relationships with the parties and handicapped MINURSO in the implementation of its mandate.

30. MINURSO continued to lack access to any local interlocutors west of the berm, which had an impact on its capacity to collect reliable information and assess and report on the situation in its area of responsibility. This also handicapped MINURSO in the implementation of its mandate.

31. With regard to assistance to the protection of Western Saharan refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had continued to provide international protection and, together with the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme, had delivered humanitarian assistance to Sahrawi refugees living in the five camps near Tindouf. The main challenge for humanitarian actors had remained the funding shortfall. UNHCR was struggling to meet international standards in its life-saving activities in the areas of protection, shelter, water and sanitation, health, nutrition, education, energy, the provision of non-food items and livelihoods.

32. The confidence-building measures, pursuant to Security Council resolution [1282 \(1999\)](#) and subsequent resolutions, to allow family links between Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps and their communities of origin in the Territory of Western Sahara had remained on hold.

33. With regard to human rights, notwithstanding a lack of access, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was concerned about the continued reported pattern of restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in Western Sahara by Moroccan authorities. During the reporting period, OHCHR had continued to receive reports of harassment and arbitrary arrests of journalists, lawyers, bloggers and human rights defenders covering human rights violations in the Territory. OHCHR had also received information on the reported forced displacement of human rights activists from their places of residence. Information received by OHCHR had reportedly pointed to the use of excessive force to disperse peaceful demonstrations, which had resulted in injuries in several instances and in the death of an individual on one occasion.

34. With regard to the human rights situation in the Territory, the Secretary-General noted that he had received a letter from Morocco on 9 September providing "information concerning the efforts and achievements of the Kingdom of Morocco for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms", including information on the specific incidents outlined in his regular reports to the Security Council.

35. During the reporting period, OHCHR had received information on the harassment, arrest, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment by Frente POLISARIO security forces of a human rights defender and a blogger engaged in documenting human rights violations in the region. Both had denounced the management of the Tindouf refugee camps on social media. They had reportedly been arrested in June 2019 by Frente POLISARIO security forces following a sit-in at the Rabouni camp to protest the disappearance in 2009 of Khalil Ahmed.

36. A meeting of the African Mechanism on Western Sahara, comprised of the Troika of the African Union, which had been expected to be held in Niamey on 8 July to consider and adopt the working modalities of the Troika, could not be held and had been rescheduled for 2020. The meeting would have been the first of the Troika, which had been established in July 2018 in Nouakchott.

37. In his observations and recommendations, the Secretary-General remained convinced that a solution to the question of Western Sahara was possible. Finding a

just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with resolutions 2440 (2018) and 2468 (2019) would, however, require strong political will from the parties and the international community. His Personal Envoy had been able to reinstate a much-needed dynamic and momentum to the political process, including through the round-table process that he had launched. It was therefore essential that the continuity and momentum in that political process not be lost. The Secretary-General called upon Security Council members, friends of Western Sahara and other relevant actors to encourage Morocco and Frente POLISARIO to engage in good faith and without preconditions in the political process as soon as a new Personal Envoy was appointed.

38. The Secretary-General further stated that there continued to be a lack of trust between the parties. Notwithstanding their respective declarations, neither Morocco nor Frente POLISARIO seemed to have confidence in the other party's willingness to engage seriously and make the compromises that were necessary to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. He believed, however, that the parties had a great number of interests in common that should encourage them to work together. He therefore urged the parties to make active gestures of good faith that demonstrated their willingness to make progress towards a political solution to the conflict and to refrain from rhetoric harmful to such a resolution.

39. MINURSO had continued to play a valuable role, notwithstanding the challenges discussed above, in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the military agreements and in engaging with the parties to prevent or reduce tensions. That role remained crucial to sustaining an environment conducive to the success of the political process. The resolution of the significant violations detailed in the previous report of the Secretary-General, and the absence of major new violations during the reporting period, reflected the value of that conflict-prevention engagement and illustrated the benefits of effective communication, for which more open channels were needed. MINURSO had continued to conduct that engagement impartially and effectively, with demonstrated results.

40. The Mission's ability to continue to play that role depended in large measure on the commitment of the two parties to support and facilitate the implementation of the Mission's mandate, to accept and implement its findings and to respect its independence and impartiality. In all three of those areas, the Secretary-General urged the parties to live up to their obligations. In the interest of all, he called once again upon all the parties to remain committed and to maintain regular contacts with MINURSO leadership, both civilian and military. The unhindered ability of the Special Representative to meet with either party as necessary was essential to his role as the Secretary-General's representative in the Territory.

41. The Secretary-General was concerned about the recent trends in Guerguerat. The increasing commercial traffic across the buffer strip and the growing civilian activities to impede it were creating tensions in that sensitive area. He called for regular civilian and commercial traffic not to be obstructed. He strongly urged both sides to refrain from any deliberate actions in Guerguerat or anywhere else in the buffer strip. He also urged the parties to speak out against those who would foment such tensions. Both sides must abide strictly by the terms of the ceasefire agreements, and the Secretary-General stressed that any intervention in the buffer strip – military or civilian – would be viewed as an escalation that could lead to another crisis in the Territory.

42. MINURSO was the main and often sole source of impartial information and advice to the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the Member States, the Secretariat and the Personal Envoy concerning developments in the Territory. In that

regard, the Mission played a key role in the effort to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict in Western Sahara in accordance with resolutions [2440 \(2018\)](#) and [2468 \(2019\)](#). MINURSO was a vital early warning mechanism that could prevent developments that could affect the climate necessary for the resumption of the political process. The Secretary-General therefore recommended that the Council extend the mandate of MINURSO.

II. Consideration by the Security Council

43. Following its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General of 1 April 2019 ([S/2019/282](#)), the Security Council adopted resolution [2468 \(2019\)](#) on 30 April 2019, by which the Council decided to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 31 October 2019. In that resolution, the Council emphasized the need to achieve a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution to the question of Western Sahara based on compromise and the importance of aligning the strategic focus of MINURSO and orienting resources of the United Nations to that end, and expressed its full support for the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General and the Personal Envoy to sustain the renewed negotiations process in order to achieve a solution to the Western Sahara question. The Council noted the intention of the Personal Envoy to invite Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria, and Mauritania to meet again in the same format and welcomed the commitment of Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania to remain engaged throughout the duration of that process, in a spirit of realism and compromise, to ensure a successful outcome. The Council also encouraged the parties to cooperate with UNHCR to identify and implement confidence-building measures, including to engage women and young people, and encouraged neighbouring States to support those efforts.

44. Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 2 October 2019 ([S/2019/787](#)), the Security Council adopted resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#) on 30 October 2019, by which it decided to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 31 October 2020. In the same resolution, the Council paid tribute to Mr. Köhler as the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, commended his efforts in holding the round-table process, which had created new momentum in the political process and called upon the parties to resume negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General without preconditions and in good faith, taking into account the efforts made since 2006 and subsequent developments, with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which would 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 that respect; and invited Member States to lend appropriate assistance to those talks.

III. Consideration by the General Assembly

45. During the debate held on 10 and 11 October 2019, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) heard statements by 91 petitioners on the question of Western Sahara (see [A/C.4/74/SR.4](#), [A/C.4/74/SR.5](#) and [A/C.4/74/SR.6](#)). On 11, 15 and 16 October, Member States addressed, among other things, the issue of Western Sahara. Member States supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, with a number of them welcoming the round tables convened by the former Personal Envoy in Geneva in December 2018 and March 2019. Some of them expressed strong support for the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and reaffirmed their support for the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Others expressed the view that the

autonomy initiative put forward by Morocco offered a realistic and practicable option that could provide the best prospect for achieving a solution based on compromise (see [A/C.4/74/SR.6](#), [A/C.4/74/SR.7](#) and [A/C.4/74/SR.8](#)).

46. At its 9th meeting, on 17 October, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled “Question of Western Sahara” ([A/C.4/74/L.3](#)), submitted by the Chair, which it adopted without a vote.

47. On 13 December, the General Assembly adopted the draft resolution, without a vote, as resolution [74/97](#). In that resolution, the Assembly, among other things, welcomed the commitment of the parties to continue to show political will and work in an atmosphere propitious for dialogue, also welcomed the ongoing negotiations between the parties, called upon the parties to cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross and to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law, requested the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to continue to consider the situation in Western Sahara and to report thereon to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session and invited the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.
