

Africa

1. The situation concerning Western Sahara

During the period under review, the Council convened one meeting and adopted one resolution in connection with the situation concerning Western Sahara.¹ More information on the meeting, including on participants, speakers and the outcome, is given in the table below. In addition, Council members held one private meeting with countries contributing troops and police to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) pursuant to resolution [1353 \(2001\)](#).² Council members also held informal consultations of the whole in connection with this item.³

On 30 October, further to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara,⁴ the Council adopted resolution [2703 \(2023\)](#), extending the mandate of MINURSO for a period of one year, until 31 October 2024.⁵ The draft resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and abstentions by Mozambique and the Russian Federation.⁶ In the resolution, the Council emphasized the need to achieve a realistic, practicable, enduring and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara based on compromise and expressed its full support for the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to facilitate the negotiations process.⁷ The Council strongly welcomed the efforts of the current Personal Envoy, including his convening of informal consultations in March 2023, and strongly encouraged Morocco, the Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania to engage with

¹ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. I.

² The private meeting was held on 11 October 2023 under the item entitled “Meeting of the Security Council with the troop-and police-contributing countries pursuant to resolution [1353 \(2001\)](#), annex II, sections A and B”. See [A/78/2](#), part II, chap. 20. D.

³ Informal consultations of the whole were held on 19 April and 16 October 2023 in connection with this item during which Council members were briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and Head of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Sahara (MINURSO) and the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. See [A/78/2](#), part II, chap. 3.

⁴ See [S/2023/729](#). See also letter dated 19 October 2023 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Council ([S/2023/794](#)).

⁵ Resolution [2703 \(2023\)](#), para. 1. For further information on the mandate of MINURSO, see part X, sect. I.

⁶ See [S/PV.9460](#).

⁷ Resolution [2703 \(2023\)](#), paras. 2-3.

the Personal Envoy throughout the duration of that process to ensure a successful outcome.⁸ The Council 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 purpose of the Charter of the United Nations.⁹ The Council also emphasized the importance of a renewed commitment by the parties to advancing the political process in preparation for further negotiations and stressed the importance of all concerned expanding on their positions in order to advance a solution.¹⁰ In addition, the Council called for the safe and regular resupply of MINURSO team sites to ensure the sustainability of the Mission's presence.¹¹

Following the adoption of the resolution, several Council members took the floor to explain their votes. The representative of Mozambique stated that his delegation had expressed readiness to engage in the negotiations process on the resolution 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 of the Council.¹² He added, however, that resolution [2703 \(2023\)](#) would not assist the parties in achieving a just, lasting and mutually accepted political solution, but heralded a gradual shift away from the mandate and only postponed addressing core issues that needed to be dealt with. The representative of Mozambique further stated that the position of his delegation was anchored in the Charter, which held that all people had the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination.¹³ The representative of the Russian Federation stated that the process of preparing and agreeing on the adopted resolution had not been fully consultative and that, for that reason, the resolution did not reflect the real situation on the ground and would hardly contribute to the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-

⁸ Ibid., para. 3.

⁹ Ibid., para. 4.

¹⁰ Ibid., para. 9.

¹¹ Ibid., para 8.

¹² See [S/PV.9460](#).

¹³ For further information on the practice of the Council regarding the principle of self-determination, under Article 1(2) of the Charter, see part III, sect. I.

General to resume a direct negotiation process between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to achieve a mutually acceptable solution.¹⁴ The representative of the Russian Federation added that since 2018, the Council's resolutions extending the mandate of MINURSO had been amended in ways that undermined the impartial and non-partisan approach to the problem of Western Sahara, including through the emergence of vague wording as well as wording that determined the direct parties to the conflict, and numerous references to the no-longer relevant round table format, which limited the mediation work of the Personal Envoy. In that regard, he reaffirmed the position of the Russian delegation in favour of a balanced and unbiased stance and expressed support to the efforts of the Personal Envoy to organize direct negotiations between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO.

Among the delegations voting in favour, the representative of the United States expressed the view that, by adopting resolution [2703 \(2023\)](#), the Council had sent a clear message that efforts to advance an enduring and dignified resolution for Western Sahara had to be intensified without further delay. While the resolution received widespread support, she expressed regret that the Council was not unanimous in renewing the mandate of MINURSO, as unity greatly enhanced United Nations efforts to achieve peace. The representative of China expressed hope that future Council discussions on MINURSO resolutions could reflect the latest changes in the situation and that the penholder could facilitate full Council consultations to garner broader consensus. Several Council members further expressed support for the autonomy initiative of Morocco as a credible and realistic way to reach a political solution to the situation concerning Western Sahara.¹⁵ Some Council members also welcomed the resumption of resupply operations at MINURSO observation sites east of the Berm, which were vital to sustain the Mission's operations in the area.¹⁶

Meetings: The situation concerning Western Sahara, 2023

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decisions and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
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¹⁴ See [S/PV.9460](#).

¹⁵ United States, France, Gabon and United Arab Emirates.

¹⁶ United States, France and United Arab Emirates.

S/PV.9460	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2023/729)	Draft resolution submitted by the United States (S/2023/802)	Seven Council members ^a	Resolution 2703 (2023) (13-0-2) ^b
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^a China, France, Gabon, Mozambique, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates, United States.

^b *For*: Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States; *against*: none; *abstaining*: Mozambique and Russian Federation.