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SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

**Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Second International Decade
for the Eradication of Colonialism: challenges and opportunities in the process of
decolonization in today's world**

**Frigate Bay, Saint Kitts and Nevis
12 to 14 May 2009**

STATEMENT

BY THE REPRESENTATIVE

OF ALGERIA

**Caribbean Regional Seminar on the Implementation of the Second
International Decade for the Eradication of the Colonialism
Frigate Bay, St Kitts-and-Nevis
12-14 May 2009**

**Statement by
Mr. Mohamed Sofiane Berrah,
First Secretary
Representative of Algeria**

M. Chairman,

Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, let me express my delegation's appreciation to you for the way you are conducting our work. I am confident that your able leadership and vast experience will steer our deliberations to a productive outcome.

My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau and to the Secretariat of the Committee for the excellent arrangements they made for us.

I would like to thank the Government and People of Saint-Kitts-and-Nevis for their hospitality and the invaluable organizational and logistical work in preparing this Caribbean Regional Seminar.

M. Chairman,

Algeria attaches great importance to the full completion of the decolonization process. In this regard, Algeria has a longstanding position on the necessary implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People, in the framework of which the Second international decade for the eradication of colonialism represents a renewed commitment of the International Community to resolve the remaining 16 non self-governing Territories.

I would like to point out the fact that the interest of Algeria to the work of the Committee on decolonization is driven by its own experience as a former French colony and its conviction and strong belief in self-determination as a fundamental principle enshrined in the UN Charter and international Law.

It is equally in Algeria's interest to ensure that the decolonization process of the 16 non self-governing Territories inscribed in the list held by this very Committee, is dealt with fairly, in accordance with international law, internationally recognized principles and in a manner that permits to the peoples of these Territories to democratically choose their own political and economic future and to enjoy and dispose of their natural resources in their best interest.

M. Chairman,

Algeria welcomes the positive development achieved so far by some non self-governing Territories and encourages them to move this historical and daunting task forward.

Yet, we remain concerned that, among these Territories, Western Sahara is still an issue of incomplete decolonization and its people have not yet been allowed to exercise its basic democratic right to decide on its own future. In many ways, this decolonization case provides the most appropriate sample in examining the lack of progress in the implementation of UN resolutions.

I will not go through the historical background of the conflict which has been extensively covered by the distinguished representative of the Polisario Front in his brilliant intervention. Rather, I would like to address three points following the agenda set forth for the purpose of this Regional Seminar.

I will start by noting that, while today it has become fashionable to speak about a political solution that is mutually acceptable in the context of a decolonization process, some tend to overlook the fact that the self-determination rests on international law and UN decolonization doctrine.

As it was stated by previous speakers, in the process of decolonization there is no alternative to the principle of self-determination which is also a fundamental human right. They also noted that self-determination has to be in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned and in conformity with the clearly defined principles contained in the UN Charter and its relevant resolutions on decolonization.

Considering the Western Sahara case and after over 100 UN resolutions and the International Court of Justice Advisory opinion, the Sahrawi people have never been allowed to exercise their right to self determination through a referendum.

Morocco, the Occupying Power, in rejecting it, has never even attempted to explain why this democratic solution is not viable and workable.

As for the challenges, I would like once again to express my delegation's deep concern regarding the ongoing human rights violation in Western Sahara. Since last year, two additional reports issued both by an ad hoc European Parliament field visit to the occupied territory and by Human Rights Watch, while confirming the dire situation of the people of Western Sahara, strongly recommended the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to assess the human rights situation on the ground. In response, Morocco, with the help of powerful members of the Security Council, persists in rejecting this justified and legitimate proposal.

M. Chairman,

I will now turn to the negotiation process between Morocco and the Polisario Front following the adoption in 2007 of the UNSC resolution 1754 (2007) which has clearly defined the parameters guiding the negotiations and the search of a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

In all its subsequent resolutions, the Security Council consistently reiterated its call to both parties, Morocco and the Polisario Front, to enter into negotiations without preconditions and in good faith.

However, Morocco has repeatedly stated that it would not negotiate anything beyond autonomy, an option based on the false assumption that Western Sahara is already part of Morocco's territory. The United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the African Union and a broad consensus within the International Community, even among Morocco's closest friends and allies, have long rejected this allegation.

My delegation would like to appreciate the statement delivered yesterday on behalf of the Secretary General of the UN in which he emphasized that "the right of self-determination must be taken into proper account as we are exploring how to accelerate the decolonization process of the remaining 16 non self-governing Territories under the C-24's purview". Further, and in a clear reference to the legal and moral responsibility of the UN towards the people of the non self-governing Territories, he added that their interest must be at the heart of the UN efforts.

M. Chairman,

It is my delegation's strong belief that the way forward for this last African colony lies inevitably at the UN. The question of Western Sahara doesn't suffer a lack of creative proposal but the absence of a genuine political will backed by an unwavering support of International Community.

We all have listened to the sole legitimate representative of the Western Sahara people in the room. His statement carries a significant message. All that Western Sahara people need is to be assured that they are in a position to express their will in a free and unequivocal manner through a free and regular referendum.

Algeria remains hopeful that by ensuring the implementation of this democratic solution, the negotiations called for by the Security Council will produce a positive outcome that is respectful to the right of the Western Sahara people to self-determination.

M. Chairman,

Let me now address the Morocco's delegation false allegations contained in the English version of its statement.

- 1) For instance, Morocco claims that Algeria created the Polisario Front. In fact, the Polisario grew up out of earlier anti-colonial movements that long pre-dated the establishment of the independent Algerian state. Let me recall here that Algeria did not even get involved in the conflict until after Morocco invaded Western Sahara in 1975. This was six years after the first Western Sahara independence movement came into being and nearly a decade after the UN first started calling for Western Sahara's independence from Madrid.
- 2) The other point is that no country in the world, not even Morocco's closest friends and allies recognizes Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara which is still, de jure, under Spanish control. The transfer of the administrative power to Morocco under the Madrid Agreement has no legal validity and, indeed, the UN has never recognized the Madrid Agreement of November 14, 1975.

- 3) Morocco also claims that the Polisario-administrated refugee camps in Algeria are potential recruiting ground for Al-Qaida. In fact, any one who knows the Sahrawi and their legitimate representative, the Polisario Front, will tell you right away that it is a secular nationalist organization and that its people is characterized by a liberal interpretation of Islam.
- 4) In the same vein, the Moroccan representative attempted to place some doubt over Polisario's credibility, not only as a partner for peace, but also as the legitimate representative of Western Sahara. Regarding the latter, one need only answer this question: If Polisario does not represent the interests of the Western Sahara people, then why is Morocco so afraid to hold a referendum? Morocco claims widespread support among native Western Sahrawi for its forced annexation, yet Morocco is unwilling to put it to a vote.
- 5) Demonizing and alienating the Polisario Front is not a recipe for creating trust and mutual respect, which both are much needed ingredients for the continuation of the negotiation process under the UN auspices.
- 6) As for the security challenges, the Polisario Front has proven to be highly cooperative with the UN mission (MINURSO), foreign governments and, as a full member of the African Union, has participated in joint security exercises with other African states.

I thank you M. Chairman,