



## *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council*

**17th Supplement**

**2010-2011**

Department of Political Affairs - Security Council Affairs Division  
Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch

### **The situation concerning Western Sahara**

#### **Overview**

During the period under review, the Security Council held two meetings and adopted two resolutions relating to the situation concerning Western Sahara. At the meetings, the Council considered the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the question of human rights in the region. The mandate of MINURSO was extended twice by the Council for periods of one year.<sup>1</sup>

#### **April 2010 to April 2011: extension of the mandate of MINURSO**

On 30 April 2010, the Council met to consider a draft resolution to extend the mandate of MINURSO.<sup>2</sup> While expressing support for the draft resolution prior to its adoption, the representative of Uganda expressed concern over the allegations of violations of human rights in the territory of Western Sahara and the absence of a mechanism for human rights monitoring on the ground.<sup>3</sup> The representative of Nigeria noted an apparent reluctance of the Council to be coherent, consistent and forthcoming on the important question of human rights and an attempt to downplay the seriousness of their abuse.<sup>4</sup>

By [resolution 1920 \(2010\)](#), the Council, inter alia, extended the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2011. The Council called on the parties to adhere fully to the

<sup>1</sup> [Resolutions 1920 \(2010\)](#) and [1979 \(2011\)](#). For more information on MINURSO, see part X, sect. I, with regard to peacekeeping operations.

<sup>2</sup> [S/2010/216](#).

<sup>3</sup> [S/PV.6305](#), pp. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

military agreements reached with MINURSO with regard to the ceasefire. Recognizing that the consolidation of the status quo was not acceptable in the long term, the Council invited the parties to demonstrate further political will towards a solution.

Following the adoption, the representatives of France and the United Kingdom welcomed confidence building measures including the expansion of the family visits programme as a way to improve the human right situation.<sup>5</sup> The representative of the United States called on the parties to work collaboratively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to facilitate the implementation of their agreement regarding family visits, including the establishment of family visits by land.<sup>6</sup> The representatives of Austria and the United Kingdom also called on the parties to engage with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure respect of the human rights of the people of Western Sahara in the territory and the refugee camps.<sup>7</sup> In order to ensure that MINURSO was making a positive contribution to the resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara instead of mandating a mission that entrenched the status quo, the representative of United Kingdom requested the Secretariat to develop suitable benchmarks against which the progress of MISURSO in achieving its mandate could be measured and asked for an assessment of such progress to be included in the next report with a view to its future configuration.<sup>8</sup>

On 27 April 2011, preceding the adoption of the draft resolution, the representative of South Africa remarked that the mandate of MINURSO was one of the few United Nations mandates, and the only one in Africa, that did not have human rights components. He maintained that MINURSO should have a human rights monitoring mandate, especially in the light of the recent reports of human rights incidents in Western Sahara, including events in Laayoune in 2010.<sup>9</sup> The representative of Nigeria was concerned about the lack of a reference to [resolution 690 \(1991\)](#) in the draft resolution

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 5 (France); and p. 6 (United Kingdom).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 6 (Austria); and p. 6 (United Kingdom).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> [S/PV.6523](#), pp. 2-3.

and called for involvement of the African Union countries in the efforts to find an international solution to the conflict.<sup>10</sup>

The Council adopted [resolution 1979 \(2011\)](#), by which it, inter alia, welcomed the establishment of the National Council on Human Rights in Morocco and the proposed component regarding Western Sahara, and the commitment of Morocco to ensure unqualified and unimpeded access to all special procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The Council decided to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2012. During the meeting, speakers noted the progress made in respecting human rights in the territory of Western Sahara, particularly the efforts and measures undertaken by Morocco to consolidate and strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights.<sup>11</sup>

### Meetings: the situation concerning Western Sahara

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
6305 30 April 2010	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara ( <a href="#">S/2010/175</a> )	Draft resolution submitted by France, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom, United States ( <a href="#">S/2010/216</a> )	Spain	Austria, France, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States	<a href="#">Resolution 1920 (2010)</a> 15-0-0
6523 27 April 2011	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara ( <a href="#">S/2011/249</a> )	Draft resolution submitted by France, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom, United States ( <a href="#">S/2011/268</a> )	Spain	France, Gabon, South Africa, Nigeria, United Kingdom	<a href="#">Resolution 1979 (2011)</a> 15-0-0

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 3 (South Africa); p. 4 (United Kingdom); p. 4 (France); and p. 5 (Gabon).