



# 46. EUCOCO

Europäische Konferenz zur Unterstützung und Solidarität mit dem saharauischen Volk  
Conferencia Europea de Apoyo y Solidaridad con el Pueblo Saharaui  
European Conference for Support and Solidarity with the Saharawi People  
Conférence Européenne de Soutien et Solidarité avec le peuple sahraoui  
الندوة الأوروبية للتضامن و دعم الشعب الصحراوي

Berlin-Deutschland 2. und 3. Dezember 2022

## **EUCOCO 2022, Policy and Information Workshop:**

### **“Self-determination for independence”**

The 46th EUCOCO takes place at a historical moment marked by a complex and challenging international context. This is mainly caused by the breakdown of the ceasefire and the deadlock in the UN process. Meanwhile, the Saharawi cause has registered progress at the diplomatic and legal level on the European, African and international scene.

Since the beginning of EUCOCO, the Policy and Information workshop has been an opportunity for the movement of solidarity with the Saharawi people to take stock of the progress of the struggle of the Frente POLISARIO, in its quest to complete the decolonization of Western Sahara and put an end to the occupation of part of its territory by the Kingdom of Morocco, to put an end to the serious violations of the fundamental rights of the Saharawi people and the plundering of their natural resources.

The workshop also has the responsibility of defining the ways and means that will make it possible to inform international opinion about the existence of Western Sahara and to assert, before international authorities and States, the primordial right to the independence of the Saharawi people. The SADR, although recognized by the African Union (AU) and many countries as a sovereign state, is still reduced today to the status of the last African colony. This glaring injustice with regard to the Saharawis is due to the Moroccan occupation, but due to the serious shortcomings of Spain, a colonial power which did not complete the process of decolonization. This in addition to The



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United Nations which did not respect its commitments negotiated between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco with a view to carrying out a self-determination referendum in 1990 allowing the Saharawis themselves, under the auspices of the UN, to express their free choice as to their political future. France, a permanent member of the Security Council, never ceases to protect the Moroccan occupiers whom it considers to be its protectorate.

In 2020, following the latest attempts by Morocco to carry out new territorial annexations in southern Western Sahara, the violation of the ceasefire agreement by Morocco and the lack of reactions from the UN, the Front POLISARIO has decided to take back the arms it had laid down in 1990, in return for the UN to carry out a referendum on the self-determination.

In 2020, Mr. Trump, President of the USA, in violation of international law, decreed that Western Sahara was part of Morocco in exchange for the establishment by the King of Morocco of diplomatic relations and regular exchanges with Israel.

In 2022, the Spanish Prime Minister addressed a letter to the King of Morocco assuring him that he supports the Moroccan proposal for a status of autonomy under Moroccan control of Western Sahara. By this reversal, the Spanish government is contributing to strengthening the power of the great Moroccan colonizer and becoming an obstacle to peace negotiations under the MINURSO.

The SADR, a member of the AU and recognized by more than 80 countries, the Frente POLISARIO recognized as an official representative by the UN which classifies Western Sahara as a "non-self-governing territory", have benefited for 46 years from unrelenting support of Algeria. Apart from Mr. Trump's administration, no state recognizes



## 46. EUCOCO

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Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara. The ICJ in The Hague confirmed this as early as 1975 in an Advisory Opinion submitted at the request of the UN Secretary General to the UN General Assembly. The ECJ in Luxembourg has, in three judgments (in 2016, in 2018 and recently again in a judgment of September 29, 2021), specified that Western Sahara is a territory distinct and separate from Morocco, and that the Frente POLISARIO is indeed the representative of the Sahrawi people; able to represent them legally and before international bodies and that the Moroccan settlers settled in Western Sahara have no legitimacy, any more than Morocco to represent the territory they occupy. In addition, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights ruled, on September 22, 2022, that all Member States of the African Union (AU) "have a responsibility under international law to find a permanent solution to the occupation and to ensure the enjoyment of the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people and to do nothing that would recognize this occupation as legal or hinder the enjoyment of this right". In effect, through this judgment, the African Court is in line with the International Court of Justice and the Court of Justice of the European Union, but it goes further by emphasizing in exemplary terms what the right to self-determination in the history of African peoples, to better stigmatize the military occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco.

EUCOCO is a vast movement of international solidarity which, since the beginning of the struggle of the Saharawi people led by the Frente POLISARIO, has demanded the recognition of the fundamental rights of this people to their independence, in the same way as the relevant UN resolutions which enabled the emancipation of peoples from colonial rule (Res. AGNU XV 14 1960).



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Berlin-Deutschland 2. und 3. Dezember 2022

Today, the struggles of Sahrawi people like that of the Palestinian people, two peoples illegally occupied by foreign powers in favor of Western interests, must be supported because their claims are legitimate and rest on the very foundations of international law. These struggles, considered in some political circles as from another era, represent on the contrary a sense of urgency to rebuild an international community based on peaceful coexistence between nations in respect of the rule of law as enshrined within the United Nations itself since its establishment after the Second World War. Contributing to the independence of Western Sahara, as to that of Palestine as a sovereign State, is a solidary contribution to respect for the right of peoples to self-determination. It is also a much-needed contribution to peace and cooperation within the Mediterranean region, as well as, a concrete way of recalling and strengthening the role of the United Nations in its missions of peace and development in the world.

### **1. The inter-parliamentary network**

As early as 1980, following the conference "Peace for the Saharawi people" at the National Assembly in Paris, the first interparliamentary group was created within the European Parliament. Subsequently, a number of interparliamentary groups were created in many countries in Europe, Africa and Latin America. It was in Algeria that the inter-parliamentary network was created under the presidency of Nelson Mandela. This international and intercontinental network makes it possible to bring together members of parliament from different levels of power (national, regional and local) and from different political horizons around the question of Western Sahara. The objective is to set up an international umbrella in order to promote the exchange of information and good practices relating to the question of Western Sahara. The representatives of the Frente POLISARIO and the members of the Support Committees can coordinate the



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الندوة الأوروبية للتضامن و دعم الشعب الصحراوي

Berlin-Deutschland 2. und 3. Dezember 2022

intergroup in their respective countries while at the level of the European Union, the Frente POLISARIO and the President of the Task Force coordinate the European Parliamentary Intergroup.

- How can we support and strengthen inter-parliamentary networks and RISPO (International Network of Parliamentary Intergroups)?
- How to reclaim the application of the judgments by the ICJ, the CJEU and the ACHPR?
- What advocacy strategy is the most appropriate to denounce the offensive of Moroccan lobbyists within national and European institutions, as well as in civil society organization?

## 2. United Nations

### 2.1 Geneva

The Geneva Support Group for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in Western Sahara, supported by more than 300 organizations, carries out throughout the year exemplary advocacy actions at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

### 2.2 New York

The European solidarity movement organizes the annual sending of petitioners to the 4<sup>th</sup> Committee of the UN in order to remind the international community of its obligations concerning the people of Western Sahara. This constitutes key elements in the Committee's advocacy strategy since it is an excellent opportunity to meet many



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الندوة الأوروبية للتضامن و دعم الشعب الصحراوي

Berlin-Deutschland 2. und 3. Dezember 2022

missions and ambassadors to the UN and to discuss with them the situation of the Saharawi people's struggle.

- Given the large participation of petitioners in support of Western Sahara in 2022, how can the solidarity movement maintain and strengthen this presence?
- How can we strengthen the advocacy strategy in order to force the Security Council to extend the mandate of MINURSO to human rights monitoring?
- How to mobilize political forces and civil society to encourage a visit by the UN Secretary General and the High Representative for Human Rights to the occupied territories?

### 3. African Union

This continental organization “had a historic role in the elaboration and adoption of the UN Settlement Plan” and it “cannot remain silent or sidelined”. Indeed, since the resumption of hostilities in Western Sahara, the African Union (AU) has always been present on the international scene. The latest proof of this is the judgment of the ACHPR of September 22, 2022. It is therefore imperative for the AU to continue to assert its presence within this issue.

- How to revive the role of the AU to become more strongly involved in the negotiation process conducted at the UN?
- How can we advocate within our public institutions to enhance the position of the AU?
- How can we support the AU observation mission in the occupied territories?



# 46. EUCOCO

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الندوة الأوروبية للتضامن و دعم الشعب الصحراوي

Berlin-Deutschland 2. und 3. Dezember 2022

## 4. European Union

The Frente POLISARIO has been carrying out actions and appeals to the CJEU and European institutions for several years to denounce the EU-Morocco association agreements which include the territories and maritime waters of Western Sahara. This Moroccan colonization makes Europe complicit in the violation of human rights and the plundering of Sahrawi natural resources. The CJEU has clarified in 3 consecutive judgments that the agreement is illegal and the obligation for the EU to put an end to it. The appeal against the judgments of the CJEU, introduced by the Commission and the Council, does not change these judgments and the European Court of Justice will deliver its decision during the year 2023. It is important to ensure and establish strong coordination with the Front POLISARIO and its lawyers as to the actions to be taken on the basis of the conclusions of the Court.

## 5. Humanitarian situation

For more than four decades, the Algerian government and international donors have shown constant solidarity with the Sahrawi refugees by providing life-saving humanitarian support. This must be recognized.

Unfortunately, under the pressure of global challenges, this support is now insufficient to meet current needs. Funds needed for food assistance alone have doubled to \$39 million this year, from \$19.8 million before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN team and other humanitarian actors are facing a significant funding shortage caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the global rise in food and fuel prices resulting from the war in Ukraine. This situation has profoundly affected all



# 46. EUCOCO

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الندوة الأوروبية للتضامن و دعم الشعب الصحراوي

Berlin-Deutschland 2. und 3. Dezember 2022

sectors of humanitarian assistance, hampering the refugees' access to food, water, health, nutrition, education and other essential services and livelihoods. In this regard, international solidarity is crucial to stop the rapid deterioration of the nutritional situation in the refugee camps and its lasting effects for the population, especially children.

The forced 75% reduction in WFP's monthly food rations is particularly worrying as it amounts to less than half the recommended daily caloric intake per person. Each beneficiary now receives less than 5 kg of ration, compared to the planned 17 kg per person per month.

- What advocacy strategy can we consider in order to put pressure on national and international institutions to increase aid?
- How can we give more international visibility to this problem?

## 6. Communication and information

For many years, the vast majority of European and Western institutions and governments have been trying to hide and conceal the causes and consequences of the conflict in Western Sahara, and this disguises their own responsibilities. Worse, Morocco is exercising serious blackmail in order to obtain support for its so-called “autonomy” proposal.

The Political Action and Communication working group of this 46th Conference must reflect and act on the most effective methods in order to demand from European institutions and governments, such as the Spanish State in its capacity as administering power and after the reversal of its government in favor of the occupation, France as the





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الندوة الأوروبية للتضامن و دعم الشعب الصحراوي

Berlin-Deutschland 2. und 3. Dezember 2022

main supporter of Morocco which it considers its protectorate, and the other governments which have shown their support for the Moroccan autonomy plan, that they assume their responsibility explicitly in order to guarantee effective and concrete steps allowing the Saharawi people to exercise their right to self-determination.

During the year 2022, we organized several actions and events on the Sahrawi cause and reached an increasingly large audience, both at the level of civil society and the institutional level. During this year, we organized several solidarity missions to the camps and several artistic and cultural projects. In March 2022, the question of Western Sahara was raised among the subjects most covered by the European media, following the caravans undertaken from Spain and the campaigns in support of the Sahrawi resistance fighters and political prisoners. The cowardly change of unilateral position of the Sanchez government mobilized the Spanish and European solidarity movements which carried out several actions, such as demonstrations and conferences as well as various advocacy campaigns. The solidarity network with the Saharawi people must continue to use this winning strategy also in 2023. It must therefore increase its contacts with the press, use this good communication strategy on social networks and continue to raise awareness in Western societies of the Saharawi question. using different media, such as films and press conferences. The working group calls for strengthening the sending of civilian missions to camps and liberated territories in order to show the world the consequences of the war and the Moroccan occupation.

In 2023, it will also be necessary to pursue and support any initiative concerning the twinning of European towns with Sahrawi towns. All the mobilization of the regions and town halls is very important because it gives a lot of visibility to the Sahrawi cause and improves solidarity with its people. The impact of these actions is remarkable on civil



## 46. EUCOCO

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Conférence Européenne de Soutien et Solidarité avec le peuple sahraoui  
الندوة الأوروبية للتضامن و دعم الشعب الصحراوي

Berlin-Deutschland 2. und 3. Dezember 2022

society. At present, the objective of these actions is to strengthen the links with the town halls and the political action in the institutions.

- How can we act towards governments to compel them to respect international law concerning the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, and promote the campaign “Self-determination for independence”?
- What European actions in order to oblige the Spanish government to respect the inalienable rights of the Saharawi people to their self-determination?
- What social pressure and mobilization measures can be most effective in achieving our goals?
- How can we support and coordinate the awareness campaigns of the European Committees, in conjunction with the CNASPS and the African and Latin American Committees?