
Africa

1. The situation concerning Western Sahara

In 2020, the members of the Council held one open videoconference in connection with the situation concerning Western Sahara to announce the adoption of resolution 2548 (2020).³ More information on that videoconference is given in the table below. In addition, the members of the Council held two closed videoconferences to discuss the situation in Western Sahara, at which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations provided briefings.⁴ Council members also held a closed videoconference with countries contributing troops and police to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) pursuant to resolution 1353 (2001).⁵ In addition, Council members held informal consultations of the whole to discuss the situation concerning Western Sahara.⁶

On 30 October, the Council adopted resolution 2548 (2020), extending the mandate of MINURSO for a period of one year, until 31 October 2021.⁷ The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and 2 abstentions.⁸ In the resolution, the Council looked forward to the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara at the earliest opportunity.⁹ The Council also emphasized the need to achieve a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution to the question of Western Sahara, expressed its full support for the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to sustain the renewed negotiation process and welcomed the commitment of Morocco, the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), Algeria and Mauritania to remain engaged.¹⁰ In that

connection, 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.¹¹

Nine Council members submitted written statements¹² providing explanations of their votes on resolution 2548 (2020).¹³ According to its statement, the Russian Federation had abstained from the vote because the process of elaborating and endorsing the document had been neither transparent nor consultative. The Russian Federation underscored that none of its delegation's principled and well-substantiated considerations, including those of a compromise nature, had been taken into account, and a whole range of practical proposals articulated by other Council members had also been left unanswered, resulting in an unbalanced text. The Russian Federation also raised concerns regarding the substitution of fundamental principles of the Western Saharan settlement by general remarks about the need to stick to realistic approaches and seek compromise, which produced ambiguity, undermined trust in the Council's work and obscured prospects for resuming the political process. According to the statement, the attempt to boost the peace process by using language that blurred previously agreed parameters of the Western Saharan settlement would rather produce the opposite result.

According to its statement, South Africa had abstained on the mandate renewal of MINURSO during its 2019–2020 term owing to the substance of and the working methods on the Western Sahara file. The Council's working methods on the Western Sahara file had been "uniquely biased and non-transparent". South Africa had consistently raised concerns about the "negotiating process" through the Group of Friends, which remained an obstacle to making progress since a draft text would be presented to Council members for it to be accepted as a *fait accompli*. According to the statement, the Western Sahara mandate was the only one negotiated in that manner and it was not

³ For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

⁴ See [A/75/2](#), part II, chap. 3. The closed videoconferences were held on 9 April and 21 December 2020 respectively. For more information, see [S/2020/558](#).

⁵ The closed videoconference was held on 12 October 2020 in connection with 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/75/2](#), part II, chap. 22.

⁶ See [A/75/2](#), part II, chap. 3.

⁷ Resolution 2548 (2020), para. 1. For more information on the mandate of MINURSO, see part X, sect. I.

⁸ See [S/2020/1063](#).

⁹ Resolution 2548 (2020), fourth preambular paragraph.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 2 and 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 4.

¹² See [S/2020/1075](#).

¹³ Belgium, China, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Russian Federation, South Africa, United States and Viet Nam.

considerate of the views of Member States, particularly of African Member States, that were excluded from the Group of Friends. South Africa further indicated that there had been no real attempt to reach a compromise on the contentious paragraphs. Regarding the substance of resolution 2548 (2020), South Africa raised several points. The text did not reflect the current realities on the ground, or adequately reflect the urgency for the United Nations to find a personal envoy to resume the stalled United Nations-led political process, and the text could have been more balanced, including returning to a six-month mandate renewal cycle instead of one year, so as to send a positive signal to all parties. South Africa also noted various concrete comments on the text of the resolution, as well as the need for an explicit reference or responsibility to be given to MINURSO to monitor the human rights situation on the ground.

Among the Council members voting in favour, many welcomed or expressed support for the work of MINURSO¹⁴ and stressed the need for a swift appointment of a new personal envoy of the Secretary-

¹⁴ Belgium, China, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Russian Federation, South Africa, United States and Viet Nam.

General.¹⁵ According to its statement, Indonesia noted that the text reflected a delicate balance, considering the sensitivity of the issue, the absence of a personal envoy and the lack of an active political process. In its statement, Viet Nam stressed the importance of considering the legitimate views of the parties concerned with a balanced and impartial approach. In its statement, China expressed hope for more thorough consultations on draft resolutions on the mandate renewal for MINURSO in the future to make the text more balanced, achieve consensus through consultation and send a positive signal.

In a letter dated 15 December 2020 addressed to the President of the Council, the United States submitted a letter enclosing the President of the United States' Proclamation on Recognizing the Sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco over the Western Sahara, dated 10 December 2020, recognizing that the entire Western Sahara territory was part of the Kingdom of Morocco and expressing that Morocco's autonomy proposal was "the only basis for a just and lasting solution to the dispute over the Western Sahara territory".¹⁶

¹⁵ Belgium, China, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Russian Federation, South Africa and United States.

¹⁶ See [S/2020/1210](#).

Videoconference: the situation concerning Western Sahara

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision, vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
30 October 2020	S/2020/1075	Letter dated 30 October 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	Resolution 2548 (2020) 13-0-2 ^a S/2020/1063

^a *For*: Belgium, China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States, Viet Nam; *against*: none; *abstaining*: Russian Federation, South Africa.

2. The situation in Somalia

During the year under review, the Council held four meetings and adopted six decisions on the situation in Somalia, three of which were under Chapter VII of the Charter. Three meetings took the form of briefings, while one was convened to adopt a decision.¹⁷ More information on the meetings,

¹⁷ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. II.

including on participants and speakers, is provided in table 1 below. In addition, Council members held nine videoconferences in connection with the item, four of which were held for the announcement of the vote on the various resolutions adopted.¹⁸ More information on

¹⁸ For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.