



PRESS RELEASE

[NEW YORK – 16 APRIL 2021] Several media outlets citing *Agence France-Presse* (AFP) published today reports about what is alleged to be the position of the Frente POLISARIO on a recent proposal by the UN Secretary-General regarding his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. To set the record straight, it is important to underline the following facts:

Four Personal Envoys and fifteen Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General have so far been involved in various stages of the UN peace process in Western Sahara. However, Morocco has managed, with complete impunity, to turn their mediation efforts into impossible missions through its procrastination and deliberate obstructionism.

In this context, it was Morocco that sabotaged the mediation efforts of former US Secretary of State, James Baker III, who was appointed as the first Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General (PESG) for Western Sahara in March 1997, leading to his resignation in June 2004.

The Moroccan authorities pursued the same obstructionist attitude towards Ambassador Christopher Ross (USA) who was appointed as PESG for Western Sahara in January 2009. They even went as far as declaring Ambassador Ross a *persona non grata* in May 2012 and preventing him from carrying out his mission and travelling to Western Sahara. As a result, he eventually resigned in April 2017.

When the Secretary-General managed to appoint former German President, Horst Köhler, in August 2017 as his PESG for Western Sahara, six years after direct negotiation between the two parties had stalled, Morocco's obstructionism turned President Köhler's efforts into an impossible mission leading him to tender his resignation in May 2019.

After frustrating the efforts of President Köhler, with the aim of maintaining the status quo, the Moroccan occupying state set out to thwart all subsequent efforts of the Secretary-General to appoint a new PESG for Western Sahara. To this end, it has not only vetoed several candidates for the PESG post but has also been trying to influence the process through a set of preconditions that abusively exclude nationals of a group of UN Member States (including Scandinavian countries, Australia, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, among others) from the list of possible candidates for the PESG post.

As an example of its misleading conduct, the Moroccan authorities, which did their utmost to stymie the UN efforts to appoint a new PESG for Western Sahara following President Köhler's resignation, are now paying lip service to the commitment to the peace process, particularly after the occupying state has breached the 1991 ceasefire and torpedoed the peace process on 13 November 2020.

Through its procrastination and deliberate obstructionism, the Moroccan occupying state however has clearly shown that it has no political will for a just and peaceful solution and that it only seeks to maintain the status quo while persisting in its attempts to unilaterally have "a tailor-made" Personal Envoy, which is totally unacceptable.

In concluding, the Frente POLISARIO underscores that the appointment of a new PESG for Western Sahara, who should be impartial, independent, competent and perform his or her mission with integrity, is not an end in itself. Rather, it is just a means to facilitate and advance the peace process towards achieving its ultimate goal, namely the exercise by the Sahrawi people of their inalienable and non-negotiable right to self-determination and independence.