

PRESS RELEASE

African Union Special Envoy for Western Sahara, H.E. former President Joaquim Chissano conducts consultations on Western Sahara in Geneva, Switzerland

Addis Ababa, 3 March 2017: The African Union (AU) Special Envoy for Western Sahara, H.E. former President Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique, conducted several consultations on the margins of the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council that was held from 28 to 1 March 2017, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

The AU Special Envoy briefed the Geneva Support Group for Western Sahara on the AU efforts to resolve the conflict in the Territory and put a sharp focus on the human rights and humanitarian situations in Western Sahara. In this regard, the AU Special Envoy underlined the necessity for the International Community to deploy more efforts in order to secure a just and durable solution of the conflict, in full compliance with the principles enshrined in the AU instruments and the UN Charter. He further informed the participants about AU's concerns over human rights violations and stressed the urgent need for an independent, impartial, comprehensive and sustained monitoring of the human rights situations in both, Western Sahara and the camps.

The Special Envoy also underlined the importance of the verdict of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), that was issued on 21 December 2016, on the EU and Morocco Agreement signed in 2012 on the mutual liberalization of the trade of agricultural and fishing products, which cannot apply to the territory of Western Sahara, as a landmark step towards ensuring the inalienable right of the People of Western Sahara to benefit from their natural resources, once they have decided their future.

President Chissano underscored that the UN Security Council, which is expected to restore full functionality of MINURSO in its upcoming meeting to be held in April 2017, should provide the Mission with human rights mandate in order to ensure independent, impartial, comprehensive and sustained human rights monitoring in the Territory.

The AU Special Envoy for Western Sahara, also held a meeting with the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR), Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, on 1 March 2017, at the Palais des Nations. They exchanged views on various matters related to human rights, with particular emphasis on the human rights of the people of Western Sahara. The AU Special Envoy reiterated the AU's appreciation to the HCHR for deploying efforts aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of the Saharawi People and urged his Office and other relevant UN agencies to play a more meaningful role in monitoring and providing technical assistance to the relevant human rights stakeholders across Western Sahara.

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