

Statement by the United Nations Associations in the Nordic countries  
*December 18, 2020*

**A new peace process must be initiated in Western Sahara**

The UN Associations in the five Nordic countries believe that renewed focus on the Western Sahara conflict must be prioritized. The world community has lost valuable time since the ceasefire was established in 1991. Unfortunately, the armed conflict has started again. If no new ceasefire and a real peace process are introduced, there is a serious risk that the war can spread to neighboring countries like Algeria and Mauritania.

The five Nordic UN Associations urge the UN to work for a new ceasefire and a real peace process. It is tragic that the world community has not been able to help set the stage for a referendum in Western Sahara and that the UN peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara, MINURSO, does not have a mandate to monitor human rights as is the norm for most UN peacekeeping missions.

The Nordic UN associations cannot find any logical argument for preventing MINURSO from monitoring human rights and we believe that it is important to create international awareness about possible human rights violations in the Territory so that they may be prevented.

We therefore suggest that the Security Council expand the mandate to include human rights so that the UN peacekeepers in the future will be able to monitor the human rights situation in the Morocco controlled part of Western Sahara, the part of Western Sahara that is under the control of Polisario and the refugee camps in Tindouf in Algeria.

We also believe that any export of minerals and natural resources from Western Sahara must be prevented until the referendum has taken place. A new monitoring system to prevent any export of such resources from Western Sahara must be established as part of a new peace process.

The Nordic UN associations also urge the Norwegian government to work for the a ceasefire and a new and real peace process in Western Sahara as Norway takes its seat in the UN Security Council on 1 January.

It is time for the UN to make a positive change in Western Sahara. The world community has been too passive and failed to secure a real peace process.

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