



Office of the Prime Minister

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bir Lehlou, Sahrawi Republic, 8 November 2021,

## **PRESS RELEASE: SAHRAWI REPUBLIC PRESENTS ITS NATIONAL CLIMATE PLAN**

From one of the world's toughest locations – Sahrawi liberated territory and refugee camps in the Saharan desert – the government of Sahrawi Republic has prepared an 'indicative' Nationally Determined Contribution (iNDC) for Western Sahara, challenging climate injustice and climate colonialism and setting out a vision for climate action. The iNDC has been launched today in Glasgow to coincide with the COP26 negotiations, from which the Sahrawi people and their government are excluded as a result of conflict, occupation and realpolitik.

Morocco occupies three quarters of Western Sahara under illegal military occupation. Its claims to the territory have been refuted by the International Court of Justice and other courts around the world including the EU Court of Justice, as well as by the UN, which considers Western Sahara a non-self-governing territory - a colony. Despite this, Morocco has exploited climate finance and governance mechanisms to position itself as a climate leader and strengthen its occupation, including Western Sahara in calculations of its territorial emissions and planned mitigation and adaptation actions. Morocco has applied to the UN clean development mechanism (CDM) to finance renewable energy in occupied Western Sahara and has used private climate finance and accreditation under offsetting schemes to develop renewables infrastructure in the occupied areas.

While living under occupation, or as refugees exposed to some of the worst impacts of climate change, the people of Western Sahara are excluded from the same international climate finance and governance mechanisms from which occupying Morocco benefits. The elected Sahrawi government cannot access international climate finance or technical support that would allow its people to adapt to the worsening impacts of the climate crisis, because the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) is not yet a UN member state.

**“Global climate governance thus systematically favours Morocco while excluding the SADR, helping Morocco strengthen its occupation while denying the Sahrawi the means to confront the climate crisis”,** says Nick Brooks of Garama 3C Ltd, which supported the development of the Sahrawi iNDC. **“Not only is this a case of extreme climate injustice, it is a literal example of climate colonialism.”**

Unlike other developing countries, the SADR cannot access the resources it needs to expand renewable energy access, build its resilience to climate stresses and shocks, or adapt to the worsening impacts of climate change.

The SADR cannot be a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or a signatory to the Paris agreement, meaning that the Sahrawi have no voice on climate change under the UN system.

**“Not only are our people subjected to a brutal occupation, they are also at the frontlines of the climate crisis”,** says Mr Adda Brahim, Minister of Environment and Water Resources of the Sahrawi government. **“We have no time to waste. Our iNDC identifies actions that can be taken under the current circumstances, and actions that can be taken once the UN-manded decolonisation process is complete. Above all, it highlights our need to be able to access climate finance and participate in climate governance mechanisms including negotiations, in line with principles of climate justice set out in the Paris Agreement. We ask for full participation in UNFCCC processes, including the submission of formal NDCs, whose development should be supported through the same financial and technical assistance mechanisms that are open to other vulnerable developing countries.”**

- *The iNDC has been developed by a team of Sahrawi and international experts, coordinated by Garama 3C Ltd. All parties have contributed to the development of the iNDC on a voluntary basis.*
- *Download the text of the NDC <https://www.spsrasd.info/news/en>.*
- *For more information about the Sahrawi NDC, or about climate change, climate justice and Western Sahara, please contact Mr Saleh Brahim of the Sahrawi Ministry of Environment and Water Resources ([polisario.sahralibre.polisario@gmail.com](mailto:polisario.sahralibre.polisario@gmail.com)).*

#### **SPECIFIC BACKGROUND TO THE INDC:**

- An NDCs is an official document that sets out what a country intends to do to address climate change through mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emission) and adaptation (reducing climate change risks and addressing impacts). Countries that have signed the Paris Agree are required to submit NDCs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat. The SADR cannot sign the Paris Agreement as it is not yet a UN member state or a party to the UNFCCC. This iNDC indicates the Sahrawi government’s willingness to address climate change and to be included in international climate change processes including negotiations.
- The Sahrawi NDC highlights measures that can be taken immediately to: address flood risks in the camps; deliver innovative small-scale renewable energy to refugees and nomadic families; establish monitoring systems for emissions, environmental health and climate; coordinate climate change planning across government departments; and build capacity through climate change training and education.
- Subject to decolonisation, the iNDC identifies measures to: carry out comprehensive climate risk assessments for the entire territory of the SADR; review and improve infrastructure planning in the light of climate change risks along the Western Saharan coast; protect vulnerable marine and coastal ecosystems; and to address the impacts of the Berm on vulnerable desert ecosystems.
- The iNDC highlights the need for the SADR to be able to access climate finance in order to implement these measures, and to access climate governance mechanisms including climate negotiations in line with principles of climate justice set out in the Paris Agreement.

These principles require the full participation of the SADR in UNFCCC processes, including the submission of formal NDCs, whose development should be supported through the same financial and technical assistance mechanisms that are open to other vulnerable developing countries.

#### GENERAL BACKGROUND ON WESTERN SAHARA:

- Western Sahara is designated by the United Nations as a non-self-governing territory, a designation used for territories in which the process of decolonisation is incomplete.<sup>1</sup>
- The International Court of Justice concluded in 1975 that there were no ties of sovereignty between Morocco and Western Sahara and stressed the Saharawi people's right to self-determination and independence. Shortly after, in blatant disrespect of the Court, Morocco invaded Western Sahara as Spain – to date the *de jure* colonial power in the territory – withdrew.
- The Frente POLISARIO - the Sahrawi national liberation movement - resisted Morocco's military occupation and proclaimed the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in February 1976. The UN recognises the Frente POLISARIO as the representative of the people of Western Sahara. The SADR has all the apparatus of a fully functioning state, has been recognised by more than 80 countries, and is a founding member of the African Union.
- War raged in Western Sahara until 1991, when the UN brokered a ceasefire and promised a referendum on self-determination. This referendum has never taken place. In November 2020 the ceasefire broke down when Morocco invaded a demilitarised buffer zone to disperse Sahrawi civilians protesting at Morocco's exploitation of Western Sahara's natural resources and the export via the demilitarised zone.
- Today, Western Sahara is divided between a Moroccan occupied zone and a zone under the control of the SADR. These two zones are physically separated by the Berm, a wall of shame, a physical barrier constructed by Morocco, consisting of fortifications, earthworks, fences and minefields.
- A considerable proportion of the Sahrawi people live in refugee camps in Algeria, where they are regularly exposed to devastating floods, heat extremes, dust storms, and food and water shortages. The remainder live under Moroccan occupation and are systematically excluded and discriminated against by the occupying Moroccan authorities. Sahrawis in the occupied territory have reported an uptick in repression by Moroccan security forces since the resumption of the armed hostilities, including house raids, arrests, kidnappings and torture. Freedom House's 2021 annual report on the status of civil and political rights in the world, ranks occupied Western Sahara among the worst territories in terms of political freedoms.<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsgt>

<sup>2</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>