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COMMUNIQUE

THE AFRICAN UNION CALLS FOR RENEWED EFFORTS TO RESOLVE

THE CONFLICT IN WESTERN SAHARA

Addis Ababa, 15 April 2014: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, welcomes the report issued by the United Nations (UN) Secretary General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, on 10 April 2014. The report covers a wide range of issues, including the consultations undertaken by the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy with the Parties to the conflict, namely the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Polisario, as well as with other stakeholders; the activities of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO); and humanitarian activities and human rights.

The Chairperson of the Commission notes the recommendation made for the UN Security Council comprehensively to review the framework that it provided for the negotiating process in April 2007, should no progress occur before April 2015. She also notes the call made to all relevant actors, in light of the increased interest in the natural resources of Western Sahara, to "recognize the principle that the interests of the inhabitants... are paramount"; as well as the recognition that the end goal remains the sustained, independent and impartial monitoring of human rights.

The Chairperson of the Commission urges the UN Security Council to seize the opportunity of the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General and the adoption of its next resolution on Western Sahara, which is expected to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2015, to give the much-needed impetus to the search for a solution to the conflict, bearing in mind that Western Sahara has been on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 1963. She recalls that, in resolution 2099 (2013) of 25 April 2013, the Security Council called upon the Parties to continue negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General without preconditions and in good faith, with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the UN Charter. It is also important that the Security Council provide MINURSO with a human rights mandate, as is the case for other UN peacekeeping operations, and address the issue of the exploitation of the Territory's natural resources, in keeping with the legal opinion issued by the UN Legal Counsel on 29 January 2002.

The Chairperson of the Commission reiterates AU's support for the efforts of the UN Security Council and those of the Secretary-General, including his Personal Envoy. It is against this background, and in line with the relevant decisions adopted by the AU Executive Council, that the Commission is taking steps to consult with a number of stakeholders, including relevant international partners, with a view to urging for renewed international efforts to facilitate the early resolution of the conflict on the basis of international legality.