

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release:

Date: 28th October 2024

Venue: Sahara Arab Democratic Republic – Refugee Camps - Shaheed El Hafed

ESTI Department, AUC conducts a Field Visit in Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in refugee camps in Shaheed El Hafed



A field visit begins in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) conducted by the Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (ESTI), African Union Commission (AUC). The visit takes place from October 28 – 30, 2024 and aims at taking stock of the education system in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Shaheed El Hafed. The delegation led by ESTI's Commissioner, H.E. Prof. Mohammed Belhocine, is comprised of the Sahrawi delegation led by H.E. Lamine Yahyaoui, Ambassador of the SADR to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and representatives of the African Union International Center for Girls and Women's Education (AU CIEFFA), a specialized and technical Institution of ESTI.

This visit is organised within the AU theme of the year 2024 and is a contribution to the AU Agenda 2063 Aspirations. It also paves the way for popularising the continent-wide [#AfricaEducatesHer Campaign](#) and the dissemination of the [Call for Action and recommendations](#) from the [1st AU Pan African Conference on Girls and Women's Education](#) that took place in July 2024.

During the ceremony to officially kickstart the field visit, Prof. Mohammed Belhocine, underscored the importance of ensuring education in every crisis and humanitarian situation, in line with the AU theme of the year on education. "There is no sustainable development, no peace and no individual or collective freedom without education. Despite all the challenges, ensuring that children of the refugee camps are well educated is a strong investment for the future", he stated.

The Minister of Education and Vocational Training for SADR, H.E. Mr Khatri Addouh, expressed his profound gratitude for this gesture from the AUC through the ESTI Department. He welcomed the AU delegation and stated that despite the efforts and tangible results, the Saharawi education system still needs support.

SADR faces significant challenges to its socio-economic development, including, a prolonged humanitarian crisis associated with adverse climate change effects and a fragile education system. Schools in the camps require rehabilitation or reconstruction. They experience shortages of trained teachers, educational materials and classrooms as well as multifaceted barriers of exclusion, especially for vulnerable groups of learners pursuing an education, from secondary to higher levels.

During the visit, the situation of education in the SADR will be gauged. The country's education best practices and initiatives for vulnerable groups, particularly girls', that are implemented will be shared, learnt and documented. Schools in refugee settings will also be visited and school meal programs explored. The country will also seize the field visit's opportunity to officially launch the African Union Initiative [#AfricaEducatesHer Campaign](#) on 30th October 2024.

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