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**FRENTE POLISARIO WELCOMES UN CHIEF TO WESTERN SAHARA,
LAYS OUT EXPECTATIONS FOR UN TALKS IN CRISIS**

4 March 2016, Bir Lehlou – The Frente POLISARIO and the Government of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) welcome the first-ever visit of the current UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, to the Saharawi refugee camps near Tindouf and the Territory of Western Sahara on 5 March.

The UN Secretary-General's visit comes at a crisis point for UN talks on Western Sahara following Morocco's refusal over the last three years to participate in any direct negotiations, its refusal to receive the UN Secretary-General during his current visit to the region, and its killing this week of a Saharawi nomad in the demilitarized buffer zone along the 2700 kilometre-long Berm dividing the Territory of Western Sahara.

Speaking on the eve of Ban Ki-moon's arrival in Tindouf, Frente POLISARIO leader Mohammed Abdelaziz called on the UN chief to use the visit to turn the page on the political stalemate that has blocked all efforts on the dispute during his time at the helm of the UN. "His Excellency Mr. Ban will see for himself the pain and suffering of a people left stranded in the desert for a generation by the failure of the international community to implement a Settlement Plan agreed by the Parties, and endorsed by the Security Council. Enough is enough. The patience of the Saharawi people has now run out." President Abdelaziz added: "The UN has lost its way on Western Sahara."

Recent attempts at bilateral negotiations and shuttle diplomacy have produced nothing. Ban's visit and his upcoming reports to the Security Council are the best opportunity in a long time to reset negotiations, and move quickly to fulfil the Council's mandate for a solution which respects the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

"The ceasefire will not hold without real progress towards the self-determination referendum promised to my people back in 1991. We want to hear from the Secretary-General in order to achieve a solution this year. Allowing the stalemate to continue would have serious consequences not only for the people of Western Sahara, but also for the prospects for peace and security in the Maghreb region. And if Morocco is unwilling to negotiate, the Security Council must take matters into its own hands, and instruct the UN to recommence preparations for a referendum."

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