



## **END OF COLONIALISM, REFERENDUM FOR INDEPENDENCE!**

### **48<sup>th</sup> EUCOCO WORKSHOP NATURAL RESOURCES**

Western Sahara is a territory rich in natural resources that has been under illegal occupation since 1975. Since the occupation, Morocco has expanded and intensified the exploitation and plundering of Sahrawi resources, attracting multinational companies and developing trade agreements with other countries and regions, such as the European Union. Under a false legality, in violation of international law and without the consent of the Polisario Front, the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people.

The plunder generates numerous benefits for the occupier and dozens of transnational companies that profit from this situation, contributing to the prolongation of the conflict and perpetuating the violation of the fundamental rights of the Sahrawi people, such as their right to self-determination and the use of their own land and resources. They are forcing the displacement of the Sahrawi people in the face of the establishment of a colonial occupation, in violation of the Geneva Convention and the civil, economic, social and cultural rights of the Sahrawi people.

In recent years, Morocco's violation of the ceasefire - which has led to a silent military conflict - has been compounded by systematic repression and human rights violations in the occupied territory, as well as economic violence against the Sahrawi people through the plundering of their natural resources.

This dynamic helps to finance the illegal occupation of the territory and consolidates Morocco's geostrategic and political position vis-à-vis the international community, making it one of the main suppliers to the European, Russian and Chinese economies, among others.

The recent decision of the European Union Court of Justice of 4 October, which annulled the trade agreements between the occupying power and the EU, marks a turning point in the denunciation of the plundering of Sahrawi resources.

Faced with this scenario, it is necessary to reach agreements and coordinate actions to denounce this situation and try to reverse it or at least prevent it as much as possible.

For this reason, the 48<sup>th</sup> EUCOCO Natural Resources Workshop has focused its work on a participatory dynamic. The objective: to create spaces for communication, reflection and debate in order to reach consensus and coordinate actions to be carried out during 2025.

The dynamics of the workshop began with a round table discussion in which experts shared the key points of the ruling as well as some opportunities for action, in addition to contextualising the current situation of expropriation with specific data, and in which Algerian parliamentary representatives provided contrasting and updated information focused on different sectors, including renewable energy, fisheries and agriculture. Finally, the

importance of creating a collective force to promote coordination and make our work of denunciation, investigation and awareness-raising more effective was highlighted.

Among other aspects, it was underlined that the ruling opens a window of possibilities with regard to the Polisario Front's own legal capacity to lodge appeals before the European courts, as well as its recognition as the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people, establishing a distinction between the people and the population of the territory.

Through a participatory dynamic, the workshop participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences around two questions: how to strengthen collective organisation and how to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the ruling.

As a result of this working group, some key issues were discussed, such as the need to make the content of the ruling accessible to institutions and non-specialist groups, especially young people, with the intention of bringing the discourse closer to the media, as well as to weave alliances with social movements. Participants also stressed the need to work with an image or symbolism that identifies the issue. They also pointed to the need to involve end-users and their organisations as allies in order to highlight the involvement of companies and administrations in the plundering. This can be done through awareness-raising and political advocacy campaigns, as well as through information materials focused on specific sectors (sardines, octopus, and tomatoes, among others) that can be adapted to each territory and country.

To articulate this, the need to collect, aggregate and share regular information from each country was highlighted.

In order to coordinate all this, it was agreed to hold 2 working meetings per year.

The first one will take place in the first months of 2025 and will propose concrete actions based on the proposals of two working groups: a first group will focus on drafting a common **informative text** on the issue, which will help to build regional alliances and create educational materials, and a second group will work on proposals for **concrete actions or campaigns** to raise awareness and denounce the issue.

The second meeting is proposed to take place in June, during the session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, where the first actions will be followed up.

Both meetings will be open to all participants of the Natural Resources workshop.

Reaffirming that the two fundamental pillars of the occupation's power are the plundering of natural resources and the systematic violation of all human rights, we also intend to expand our efforts to continue building a joint response that will help us coordinate and create synergies of action between the Human Rights and Natural Resources working groups.

Together we will be able to defend the ruling that Morocco and Western Sahara are two separate and distinct territories.

Western Sahara is not for sale!  
Sharara MATIMBA

*Lisbon, 30 November 2024*