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Geneva, 23 March 2012

Mrs High Commissioner,

I have been instructed by my Ministry to convey Morocco's surprise and bewilderment at the participation of the head of the MENA Section in your Office, Mr Frej Fennich, in a side event hostile to Morocco. This event was organized on 15 March on "The human rights situation in Western Sahara" by the polsario and anti-Moroccan NGOs in the margins of the session of the Human Rights Council, and a film was shown on this occasion.

Mr Fennich explained his presence in the room next to a so-called representative of the polsario saying that he had "entered the room by mistake".

The presence of an official of the Office of the High Commissioner in charge of Northern Africa is an unfriendly act towards Morocco. It attests to a bias in a dossier for which he is responsible. The right to information may in no way justify the participation of a United Nations official in an event hostile to a member country of the United Nations. All the more since Mr Fennich never attended any of the side events organized by Morocco on the Sahara or on any other subject, no more than he attended events organized by Moroccan NGOs.

The Kingdom of Morocco respects and defends the independence and neutrality of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. However, Mr Fennich's participation in this anti-Morocco event flies in the face of this sacrosanct principle of neutrality.

While expressing our protest against this attitude, the Kingdom of Morocco would be extremely grateful if you would instruct those in charge of our region's dossier to scrupulously respect their obligation of neutrality and refrain in the future from doing anything that could compromise the cooperative relationship between Morocco and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Yours respectfully,

L'Ambassadeur, Représentant Permanent

Mrs. Navanethem Pillay
High Commissioner for Human Rights

