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HAUT-COMMISSARIAT



UNITED NATIONS  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

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Excellency,

I am writing in reference to our meeting of 23 March and your letter of the same date, in which you raised your concerns regarding the attendance of an OHCHR staff member at a Human Rights Council side event on the human rights situation in the Western Sahara.

According to the information provided by the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council, the event was organised by three ECOSOC-accredited NGOs, and was carried out in accordance with the rules established by the Council.

Side events at the Human Rights Council are public meetings where non-governmental organizations may raise a diversity of issues and opinions, and contribute to discussions on the promotion and protection of human rights. These are democratic spaces for the exercise of the freedom of expression, association and assembly, and are highly valued forums of exchange.

It is my expectation that OHCHR staff attend side events and other fora organised on the margins of Human Rights Council meetings. It is part of the OHCHR mandate and of staff professionalism to hear all sides impartially, in accordance with United Nations principles. The attendance of OHCHR staff at side events does not in any way imply endorsement of any views expressed by participants.

The Government of Morocco has undertaken important positive steps towards ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights in Morocco in recent months. I wish to commend these initiatives, and I look forward to continuing our cooperation in the future.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

*Navarethem Pillay*  
Navarethem Pillay

High Commissioner for Human Rights

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