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## Western Sahara – Africa's last colony

### Conference

Date: **4<sup>th</sup> of March 2010**

Time: **16:00 – 22:00 Uhr**

Location: **C3, Sensengasse 3, 1090 Vienna**

### Program

#### **16.00 – 16.30 | Opening**

address of welcome: Barbara Prammer, chairwoman of the Austrian Parliament

presentation of the program: Andreas Balog, GEZA

#### **16.30 – 17.30 | Western Sahara – Struggle for Self-determination and Human rights**

Emhamed Khadad, Coordinator of POLISARIO with MINURSO

Ingunde Fühlau, former director of the contact bureau of MINURSO in Tindouf

*Facilitator: Magda Seewald, VIDC*

#### **17.30 – 17.45 | coffee break**

#### **17.45 – 19.00 | Self-determination and Resources: economic interests and international law**

Pedro Pinto Leite, International Platform of Jurists for East Timor

Axel Goldau, Western Sahara Resource Watch

Karin Scheele, chairwoman of the Austrian-Saharawi society (ÖSG),

former chairwoman of the Western Sahara inter-parliamentarian group in the European Parliament

*Facilitator: Andreas Balog, GEZA*

#### **19.00 – 19.15 | break**

#### **19.15 – 20.15 | Conclusion – public panel discussion: „Future for Western Sahara at last? Current chances and challenges“**

*Facilitator: Karin Scheele, ÖSG*

#### **20.15 – 22.00 | Conclusion**

**Languages:** German and English

## Background

Since 35 years now, regardless of numerous UN-resolutions and an unambiguous report of the International Court of Justice, the people of the Western Sahara are waiting in vain for their right of self-determination to come true. In 1991 the Sahrawis have agreed on a cease-fire and on a referendum, organized by an UN-Mission (MINURSO). But till today the Western Sahara remains the last African country, still appearing on the UN-list of not de-colonised countries. The humanitarian condition in the refugee camps in the Algerian desert is precarious, the human rights situation in the occupied territories highly problematic. At the same time international actors are exploiting the rich natural resources in the Western Sahara. Problematic in particular is the fishery agreement between the EU and Morocco that enables European fishing fleets to fish in the Sahrawian shore waters.

Is it possible to overcome the discrepancy between political realism and international law that influences negatively the peace process and the sustainable development in the region?

## The speakers

**Ingunde Fühlau** worked from 1981 to 2007 in different positions in the UN. Based in Africa, Asia and New York, she was responsible for the UN Development Program (UNDP) and other UN-organizations in the field of technical cooperation. Between 2003 and 2007 she headed the liaison office of the UN-Mission for the Western Sahara (MINURSO) in Tindouf/Algeria and was also responsible for the coordination with POLISARIO.

**Axel Goldau** studied Biology at the Freie Universität Berlin. Since 1998 he is editor of the magazine "Kritische Ökologie" that deals with environment and sustainable development issues and is published by the Institute for Applied Culture Analysis in Göttingen, Germany. Axel Goldau is involved amongst other things in the international discussion on the preservation of biological diversity, its sustainable use and a fair distribution of the profit of that use. In relation with the Western Sahara he is involved with the Western Sahara Resource Watch-Campaign "FISH ELSEWHERE".

**Emhamed Khadad** is member of the POLISARIO leadership since 1982 and since 1996 coordinator of the POLISARIO (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguía el Hamra and Río de Oro) with the MINURSO. Emhamed Khadad was ambassador to Algeria and director of the ministry of defence. He was responsible for the preparation process for the UN-referendum and the negotiations with the UN under the auspices of special envoy James Barker. Mister Khadad represented in numerous international conferences the Sahrawi Republic and POLISARIO, among other things he took part in the informal talks with UN-special envoy Christopher Ross in August 2009 in Austria.

**Pedro Pinto Leite** studied law at the Universities of Lisbon and Leiden (Netherlands). He is secretary of the *International Platform of Jurists for East Timor* (IPJET) and member of the *International Council of the International Association of Jurists for the Western Sahara* (IAJUWS). Pedro Pinto Leite was election monitor in Eritrea, Mozambique and East Timor and organised several international conferences about the matter of East Timor and the Western Sahara. He is co-editor of the anthology *International Law and the Question of Western Sahara* and wrote numerous articles about the right of self-determination.

**Karin Scheele** was chairwoman of the Inter-parliamentarian group „Westsahara“ and head of the SPÖ-delegation in the European Parliament. Since 2008 Mrs. Scheele is member of the provincial government of Niederösterreich. Before she was appointed to work in the European parliament, she was in the international secretariat of the SPÖ responsible for the department development and politics. She is a recognized expert on the Western Sahara and chairwoman of the Austrian-Saharawi Society (ÖSG).

**Andreas Balog** studied law at the University of Vienna and worked in international cooperations. Since August 2008 he is secretary of the Gemeinnützige Entwicklungszusammenarbeit GmbH (GEZA). Andreas Balog is a member of the *International Platform of Jurists for East Timor* (IPJET) and lecturer on Human Rights and the Western Sahara at the University of Vienna.


**Magda Seewald** studied political science at the University of Vienna. She is working since 2005 as project coordinator at the VIDC in the area of gender and conflict.

**We are looking forward to welcome you there!**

**Registration:** [office@geza.at](mailto:office@geza.at), Tel: +43-1-89145-341

**A joint event of GEZA and VIDC.**

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