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Referendum in
Western Sahara



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l'Organisation d'un Référendum au
Sahara Occidental

MINURSO

Press Release

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After visits to Algiers, Nouakchott, Rabuni and Rabat, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, former German President Horst Koehler, paid a three day visit to Western Sahara from 28 June to 1 July which included meetings in Laayoune, Smara and Dakhla.

The Envoy met local authorities, members of a great number of civil society organisations and members of the business community. President Koehler was briefed on the social and economic situation and on the human rights situation in Western Sahara. The ongoing debate about the right use of natural resources was another topic that the President's interlocutors raised with him repeatedly.

In his meetings, President Koehler stressed the importance of making progress towards a just, lasting and mutually agreeable political solution to the conflict which will provide for the self-determination of the Sahrawi people. He underlined the need for a new spirit of realism and compromise. Such a solution, the President stressed, would remove obstacles to more foreign direct investment and to the creation of growth and jobs in Western Sahara and the entire Maghreb region. While his interlocutors from civil society expressed a diversity of views, they all shared a strong desire to see the conflict resolved. The Personal Envoy was encouraged by the openness of all interlocutors to play a constructive role in the search for a solution to the conflict, including by building trust across the political divide.

President Koehler would like to thank all his interlocutors in Western Sahara for the many useful and frank exchanges he had with them and for their hospitality. He regrets that, because of time constraints, he was not able to speak to each of the many people who requested to meet with him. He would also like to thank SRSO Colin Stewart and all MINURSO staff for their ongoing support to his mission. President Koehler left the Territory yesterday.

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