Madam President,

My name is Aminatou Haidar, president of ISACOM¹. I thank the Special Rapporteur for highlighting that groups in vulnerable situations must be enabled to exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association without impediments.

In Western Sahara, violations of the right to create associations have been part of a pattern of repression targeting any Sahrawis in favour of independence. Protests against the Moroccan rule are systematically prohibited, activists are beaten, imprisoned and sentenced without due process. NGOs suffer arbitrary and politically motivated restrictions.

In September 2020, after establishing in El-Ayoun the organisation ISACOM, Moroccan occupation forces maintained severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of its members for months, preventing us from leaving our residences or receiving visits and intimidating us and our families.

Constant surveillance, physical attacks, acts of torture and judicial harassment have been on the rise ever since. My colleague Sultana Khaya has been under house arrest for seven months now. In May, Sultana and Mina Baali were both brutally attacked by Moroccan agents. Many other Sahrawi activists were beaten and imprisoned.

Perpetrators of these crimes must be held accountable, and Sahrawi civil society must not only be protected but allowed to flourish.

Madam President,

Western Sahara is at the mercy of a brutal occupying power since 1975. It is time for the UN to assume its responsibility for its decolonisation. I call on the Council to urge Morocco to end the systematic human rights violations and ensure that the Sahrawi people are enabled to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

Thank you.

¹ Sahrawi Organ against Moroccan Occupation