PERMANENT MISSION OF BELIZE
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Statement delivered by H.E. Mrs. Janine Coye-Felson, Permanent Representative of Belize to the General Assembly on Agenda Item 62: Use of the veto
23rd November 2026

Mr. President,

Belize gives due regard to Article 24 of the Charter, by which we, the Members of the United Nations, confer on the Security Council **"primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security"**, and agree that in carrying out its duties under that responsibility the Council **"acts on [our] behalf"**.

The same Article requires that, in discharging those duties, the Council **"shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations".** Among them are the peaceful settlement of disputes, international cooperation, and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and **self-determination of peoples**.

Belize recalls these provisions to make a simple point. The Council acts on **our** behalf, and the Council must act i**n accordance with the Charter.**

So when the Council is unable to discharge its duty, it is right that the Assembly convenes.

The Assembly has its own competence under the Charter to discuss, and to make recommendations on, questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. To use this debate merely to condemn the veto would sell that competence short.

These occasions are for interrogating the Council's failure, holding it up to the Charter, and shining a light on what can, and indeed what must, be done.

Today's debate is exceptional in this regard.

The question of Western Sahara has **long been** before the General Assembly, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice; and each has affirmed the right of the people of Western Sahara to **self-determination, a right owed *erga omnes* and a peremptory norm from which no derogation is permitted**.

Sixty years ago this Assembly called for a referendum under United Nations auspices.

In 1975 the Court found no legal ties that could stand in the way of "**self-determination through the free and genuine expression of the will**" of the people of Western Sahara.

In 1991 the Council established a Mission whose very name carried **the promise of a referendum**.

There could be no clearer mandate. Yet decades later, **it remains unfulfilled**. And worse, a question of decolonization is being recast as a humanitarian issue.

In those decades lives have been lost: Sahrawi men, women and children, and those who served under the United Nations flag. We *mourn* them.

For their sake, it behooves this Assembly to try harder. It behooves the Council to act, **but never at the expense of the right it is bound to uphold**.

Mr. President, the fundamental failure of 30 October was not the individual veto. Eleven members supported a text that would have preserved the Mission but, in our view, did not so clearly preserve the right the Mission was created to serve. When a technical extension was then put to the vote,

three members supported it, one opposed it and eleven abstained. **What began as one veto metastasized into a collective failure of the Council.**

What is clear is that the Council did not set out to end the Mission. Both texts before it would have extended the mandate. **Belize therefore urges the Council to return to the table and mend this breach.**

The lapse of a mandate does not change the law. Western Sahara remains a Non-Self-Governing Territory, and the responsibility of the United Nations towards its people, reaffirmed by this Assembly without a vote in resolution 80/89, endures.

We appreciate the challenges: decades of impasse, the difficulties of the referendum acknowledged in this very debate, and the realities on the ground. But to appreciate the challenges is not to depreciate the mandate. That mandate is that the **people of Western Sahara freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.**

This, Mr. President, is what the Charter asks of the Council, acting on our behalf.

I thank you.