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UNIAO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PRESS RELEASE

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission deplores Morocco's decision to remove personnel from MINURSO

Addis Ababa, 18 March 2016: The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, has learnt with deep shock the decision by Morocco to remove 84 people, including AU personnel, from the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which constitutes a very dangerous precedent that challenges the mandate of the United Nations Security Council in maintaining international peace and security. She emphasizes that the presence and operation of MINURSO in Western Sahara is pursuant to Security Council resolution 690 of 29 April 1991.

The Chairperson stresses that this decision by Morocco will further complicate the current deadlock in the peace process, rekindle tensions in Western Sahara, and threaten the regional security at a time when the international community is mobilizing to find a definitive solution to the conflict in Western Sahara in accordance with international legality, including relevant OAU/AU and United Nations decisions.

The Chairperson calls, once again, on the UN Security Council to fully assume its responsibility in the matter, by acting under Chapter VII, to demand Morocco to withdraw its decision for the removal of MINURSO personnel. Furthermore, she urges the Security Council to reaffirm the full mandate of MINURSO, including the organization of referendum for Self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

In this respect, the Chairperson stresses the need for the international community as a whole, to continue to provide support, unreservedly, to the ongoing efforts by UN the Secretary-General, Ban-Ki Moon, and his Personal Envoy, Christopher W.S. Ross, towards materializing the solution to the conflict in accordance with international legality.