MADRID’S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES VICE-CHANCELLORS CONFERENCE (CRUMA)

MADRID’S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES STATEMENT ON WESTERN SAHARA

I.-General Considerations

The decolonization process in Western Sahara – more than thirty years later – remains unresolved, despite the permanent UN resolutions reaffirming the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people - not forfeitable legal frame for a fair and democratic solution within the international legality frame -, not yet accepted by the Government of Morocco, among others. This stagnation triggers a political conflict which affects region’s stability, security, development and future, a permanent violation of citizens’ human rights in the occupied territories, as well as a serious humanitarian problem due to Sahrawi people’s situation in the refugee camps in Tindouf (Algeria) which depend on International aid and Co-operation. It is up to Spain, its government, its institutions, the different administrations, the political forces, social organizations and society, as a former colonial power and still today a territorial administrator, to play an active role and a direct political and diplomatic implication on the resolution of this unresolved colonial conflict, on the base of the rules and principles of the international community.

II.-Madrid’s Public Universities and Western Sahara.

It is surprising, incomprehensible and unjustified that the Spanish civil society – and no others spheres – is the one investing the most on this process of raising awareness and helping Saharan people. From these considerations and facing these realities, Madrid’s public universities: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universidad de Alcalá, Universidad Carlos III, Universidad Complutense, Universidad Politécnica and Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, for the second consecutive year, from May 27th to May 30th 2008, opened a public sphere of reflection to which all the political, social, cultural, academic, artistic and intellectual actors, both native and foreigners, were invited with the aim to grow familiar, to dialogue, to discuss, to know greater in depth, and to raise awareness on Sahrawi world, aspiring to relocate the Western Saharan issue in the Spanish political, social, and cultural agenda and to favour a solution which respects the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people. Madrid’s public universities wishes, by this declaration, to join other initiatives - both old and recent - generated among different social collectives and public opinion and with the same purpose.
III.-Agreements and commitments

In this framework and facing the current blockage to the self-determination process, Madrid’s public universities demand the Government and political forces, for the formulation and implementation of a State pact which, including the civil society, enables to reach, under consensus, the solution to this conflict, dialogue in which the universities offer themselves to participate.

On the other hand, and from the university autonomy, Madrid’s public universities assume by the means of the present declaration, the following commitments related to the design and implementation of policies regarding the Sahrawi issue:

1.- To continue fostering the stable university platform of solidary work allowing to raise projects and initiatives shared between institutions and Sahrawi society in the short, mid and long term in the fields of awareness raising, research and training focussed on the establishment of a good knowledge of the Sahrawi reality and its history, in order to facilitate a better social work and intervention.

2.- To reactivate, among other initiatives, co-operation programs in the secondary and higher education field, in the development of both teaching and spreading of Spanish language, the recognition, defence and protection - supported by international organizations – of Sahrawi’s cultural heritage and Historic Memory, as well as in the employment, health and all other aspects that may improve camps’ and liberated territories quality of life. And in this sense, we demand the involvement of the different ministries and administrations implicated in this task: the Ministry of Education, Social Politics and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation (through its AECID), the Ministry of Culture (Cervantes’ Institute), the Government of Madrid Region (regional cultural ministry and regional immigration ministry) and the Spanish Universities’ Vice-chancellors’ Conference (CRUE).

3.- To critically observe the role of the media, not only in the improvement of the dissemination of the Sahrawi cause within society and public opinion, but also in the denunciation of the violation of human rights in the occupied territories.

4.- To raise the above commitments to the rest of the Spanish universities in order for them to be assumed by the CRUE.

Finally, we declare that only by means of adopting and implementing such policies, will there be a fit reparation - although still insufficient and belated - of the immense debt of recognition, affection and gratitude that Spain has got with Sahrawi people.

Madrid, July 11th 2008