

14 June 2017  
Brussels

COSCO Group  
Att: Mr. Xu Lirong, Chairman of the Board  
[internet@cosco.com](mailto:internet@cosco.com)

**Regarding your company's participation in a transport of phosphate rock from occupied Western Sahara**

Dear Mr. Lirong

We have the honour to present our compliments. We are writing regarding your company's transports of phosphate rock from Western Sahara and the role of COSCO Group in this regard.

A report that we are to publish on 16 June 2017 will particularly highlight the transports of phosphate rock. Particularly, we are concerned about the following shipments in which companies of the COSCO Group are registered as operator:

*Kang Hing* (IMO 9240823) departing occupied Western Sahara on 10/11/2016 for Paradip, India.  
*Jing Lu Hai* (IMO 9747558) departing occupied Western Sahara on 01/10/2016 for Geismar, USA.  
*Jin Jing Hai* (IMO 9747546) departing occupied Western Sahara on 10/05/2017 for Geismar, USA.

Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW) is an independent, non-governmental organization based in Brussels. Our work consists of factually and neutrally researching and commenting on matters about natural resources in Western Sahara. Western Sahara, as you may know, is often referred to as *Africa's last colony*. It was invaded by Morocco in 1975, and is divided by the world's longest fortified structure, the 'berm', which features some five million landmines, and stretches 2400 kilometres across the territory. The berm is garrisoned by an estimated 60,000 Moroccan armed forces. Across the berm, across the border to Algeria, half the Saharawi population reside in six refugee camps. In 1991, the United Nations, by agreement of Morocco and the Polisario Front, committed to deliver a self-determination referendum for the Saharawi people, something assured for them in a decolonizing world as a basic human right. But that referendum has not yet come to pass, and all the while, phosphate mineral rock from the occupied area of Western Sahara continues to be exported. The Saharawi people, including civil society organizations and their democratically elected government, have been outspoken in protesting the mining, export and ocean transport of the phosphate commodity. The value of the cargo aboard the vessel operated by your company corresponds to a substantial part of the humanitarian aid that the refugees rely on annually.

The UN Legal Counsel commented in 2002 that any exploitation of natural resources in Western Sahara would be in violation of international law if the people do not consent to it. The Court of Justice of the EU on 21 December 2016 came to the same conclusion.

We contact you for two reasons in relation to your company's operations.

First, to protest the continuous shipments that company your company is engaged in. We ask you to not undertake such transports again in the future.

Second, we kindly ask your company to respond to the following question:

*Has your company obtained the consent of the representatives of the Saharawi people prior to undertaking the mentioned transports?*

The answer will be made available on our website [www.wsrw.org](http://www.wsrw.org).

We look forward to your reply, which can be sent to the email [shipping@wsrw.org](mailto:shipping@wsrw.org). Please let us know what information we might offer further to what we have written above.

With sincere regards,

/sign./

Erik Hagen

Board member, Western Sahara Resource Watch

[shipping@wsrw.org](mailto:shipping@wsrw.org)