

Human Rights Council - 31st Session (29 February-24 March 2016)

Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Advisor to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders

Statement by Ireland

3 March 2016

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and adds the following.

Mr President

We welcome both the Special Adviser to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders; and thank them for their presentations today.

Ireland warmly welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur, focused on good practices in the protection of human rights defenders. We have studied with interest the practices and protection initiatives outlined, in relation to the three interrelated areas of:

- strengthening the resources and capacities of defenders
- practices that foster an enabling environment for the defence of their rights; and
- regional and international practices that support the protection of defenders at the local and national levels.

Ireland notes with regret the fact that 17 visit requests made by the Special Rapporteur are still outstanding. We call on all States to issue a standing invitation to the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and to respond promptly and positively to visit requests.

We share the Special Rapporteur's concern, as expressed in the report, regarding shrinking civil society space in many parts of the world. It was out of concern for this negative trend – as well as our conviction that civil society can play a key role in all our societies – that Ireland, along with our partners in the cross-regional core group Chile, Japan, Sierra Leone and Tunisia, has introduced resolutions on this topic to the Council. We look forward to the OHCHR report on good practices scheduled for submission to HRC 32 in June 2016.

We appreciate the similar focus on good practices in the Special Rapporteur's most recent report. We welcome the intention for a follow-up report, including a compendium of good practice. In that regard, we see considerable merit in the 7 principles identified in the report as underpinning good practices in the protection of human rights defenders. We applaud the fact that – despite the complexity of the topic - these principles succeed in expressing simply and concisely some of the key issues concerning human rights defenders, and we intend to study them further.

Mr President

Ireland, consistent with our deep and longstanding commitment to international law and multilateralism, attaches great importance to the mandate of the Special Adviser to the

Secretary General on Prevention of Genocide, as well as the linked mandate of the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect.

It is now over 10 years since all States, by consensus, accepted and adopted the principle of responsibility to protect persons from genocide and other atrocity crimes and the primary role of States in this regard. While positive examples of early warning are emerging, it is a cause of collective shame that, so many years on, we are still grappling with the challenge of bringing that solemn promise into practice.

We would like to address our questions to both the Special Adviser and the Special Rapporteur, given the links between their work:

- At the international level, how can the Special Procedures and other mechanisms of the Human Rights Council better contribute to the work of the Special Advisers on prevention of Genocide and R2P?
- On the ground, does the situation of human rights defenders present particular challenges or opportunities in the context of prevention of genocide? And to what extent do you consider that the extent of civil society space in a State may be a significant factor in early warning of risk of genocide; or in the taking of practical steps to prevent genocide?

Thank you