

Human Rights Council – 25th session (3-28 March 2014)

Intervention by Ireland during Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Mali

26 March 2014

Mr. President,

Ireland welcomes the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali, Mr. Baldo, and thanks him for his dedication to his mandate, his report to the Council, and his presentation today.

We are encouraged by the Independent Expert's assessment that the main protagonists have demonstrated the political will to find lasting solutions to the crisis which has afflicted Mali. Nevertheless, Ireland is concerned that the precarious human rights situation in the short-term could have serious consequences for the long-term peace, security, and human rights prospects of Mali and the wider Sahel region.

While the security situation in Mali has stabilised, we note the Independent Expert's assessment that there is a continued risk of terrorist and guerrilla operations in the north of the country. The importance of effectively protecting human rights while countering terrorism cannot be overstated. Human rights violations have the potential to exacerbate the long-standing tensions which have simmered in northern Mali since independence. In particular, we are disturbed by allegations of torture and ill-treatment in State security facilities, and we share the Independent Expert's regret that neither he nor any other organization has to date been granted access to those detention centres. We call on the Government of Mali to afford full and unsupervised access to detainees to the UN and other relevant bodies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

We note also the cross-cutting emphasis placed by the Independent Expert on the climate of impunity which currently prevails in Mali. Ireland is especially concerned at the possibility of *de facto* amnesty being granted for acts committed by armed groups in northern Mali which might potentially be considered international crimes.

Could the Independent Expert elaborate on the complementary roles to be played by the national judiciary and the ICC in ensuring that impunity does not take further root in Mali?

Ireland is also deeply troubled by the grim findings of the Independent Expert in relation to sexual and gender-based violence, and his concern that alleged perpetrators of sexual violence enjoy impunity for their actions.

In light of this, Ireland would ask the Independent Expert the main obstacles to the full and effective prosecution of violence against women in Mali.

Thank you, Mr. President.