

**Human Rights Council – 31<sup>st</sup> Session (29 February – 24 March 2016)**

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Privacy and the  
Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief**

**Statement by Ireland**

**9 March 2016**

Ireland aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union and adds the following.

Mr. President,

Ireland thanks both the Special Rapporteur on Privacy and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief for their presentations. We wish to focus our remarks today on the report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Ireland welcomes this report and its thoughtful and detailed consideration of the *positive interrelatedness* of freedom of religion or belief and freedom of opinion and expression. We share the Special Rapporteur's perspective on the mutually reinforcing nature of these rights and the fact that their protection is indispensable in shaping free and democratic societies in which diversity can flourish and be celebrated.

As recognised in the Special Rapporteur's report, this positive interrelatedness does not preclude challenges to the realisation of these rights. A key challenge is striking a balance between freedom of expression and the prohibition of incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Mr President

The primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, lies with States. However, the successful realisation of this right requires the engagement of a range of stakeholders.

In this regard, the report advocates for the development of a culture of critical public discourse and points to the responsibility of States to create a safe and enabling environment for the media and civil society organisations to work towards counteracting intolerance and preventing acts of incitement, hostility and violence.

Could you elaborate on how the root causes of this intolerance can be addressed through this discourse and suggest practical measures that stakeholders such as States, media and civil society organisations can take to promote this discourse?

Thank you.