

Human Rights Council – 29th Session (15th June – 3rd July 2015)

Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Statement by Ireland

17 June 2015

Mr. President,

Ireland would first like to extend a warm welcome to both Special Rapporteurs and to stress the importance of the independence of their mandates and of all Special Procedures.

We thank the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression for the presentation of your first report to the Council today. We wish you well in your work and look forward to your contribution to this important mandate over the coming years.

Your report to the Council is a very valuable analysis of how encryption and anonymity in digital communications can facilitate and enable the exercise of the rights to privacy and freedom of opinion and expression. We fully agree that the Internet has profound value for the promotion of human rights and development and that as such, an open, free and secure Internet is vital to empower and protect individuals. It is clear also that strong encryption technologies and online anonymity help shield individuals from surveillance, harassment, cyber-crime and breaches of their privacy.

Therefore, it is vital that States ensure any measures, particularly restrictive measures on the use of new technologies, are fully in line with international human rights law. We appreciate the practical recommendations you have made to all stakeholders in their efforts to ensure the same rights are protected online as well as offline.

We would be very grateful if you could elaborate further on how new technologies can assist in designing ways to reduce the risk of reprisals, particularly for individuals cooperating with the United Nations.

Turning now to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of assembly and association; we thank you for your report and your presentation to the Council today.

Ireland shares your view that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are essential to ensuring all individuals have a voice in the decisions which directly affect their lives and to securing other rights.

More engagement and inclusive participation can only cultivate democracy, enhance the promotion and protection of human rights, prevent violations and abuses, and foster social and economic development. Therefore, ensuring a safe and enabling environment for civil society in which to operate is crucial to addressing concerns relating to the sustainability of economic growth and its impact on the environment and human rights.

You have mentioned a couple of examples of good practices in relation to enhancing dialogue between Governments and civil society in your report, such as through the Open Government Partnership, of which Ireland is a participating member. Could you elaborate on any other examples of platforms or mechanisms which are aimed at ensuring the real and effective participation of civil society in the governance of natural resources, particularly at local or national level?

We thank both Special Rapporteurs again and wish you all the best in your further work.