

26th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 2 – General Debate

Joint Statement on the OHCHR and the human rights situation in Bahrain

Geneva, 10 June 2014

Mr. President,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of a group of 46 States.

We welcome the positive steps taken by the Government of Bahrain in order to improve the human rights situation. In particular, the establishment of the Office of the Police Ombudsman, the Special Investigation Unit, the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission and the creation of an NHRI. We urge these institutions to proactively fulfil their mandate and encourage the Government to uphold its commitment to these institutions and their independence. We also welcome the recent report of the Ministry of Interior Ombudsman.

We note with satisfaction that a technical visit of the OHCHR took place this year and that public consultations between all stakeholders, including civil society were conducted during the visit. We welcome the fact that the OHCHR was allowed to visit prisons and could support the parliament in the creation of the National Human Rights Commission to be in conformity with Paris Principles.

However, the human rights situation in Bahrain remains an issue of serious concern to us. We are concerned about the increases in long sentences for exercising rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the lack of sufficient guarantee of fair trial. We are concerned about the repression of demonstrations. There are also concerns that peaceful demonstrations are frequently disrupted by a minority of violent demonstrators. We expect that all sides refrain from violence. Furthermore, we are concerned about the continued harassment and imprisonment of persons exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, including human rights defenders and journalists. We are troubled by continuing reports of ill-treatment and torture in detention facilities. We are also concerned about cases of arbitrary deprivation of nationality without due process. Lastly we are concerned that there

is insufficient accountability for human rights violations and urge that all allegations are properly investigated including by the newly established institutions. In that regard we also note the need to continued efforts to judicial reform to ensure its independence, impartiality and improved capability.

We call upon the Government to address these concerns and expedite the full implementation of the recommendations received from the BICI and the UPR recommendations accepted by Bahrain by undertaking further measures, in particular amending or repealing legal provisions that unduly restrict human rights. We call on all parties to constructively and inclusively collaborate in that regard. We urge the Government to further enhance its cooperation with the OHCHR and the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and reschedule previously planned visits as soon as possible. We call on the authorities to pursue an open door policy for all civil society organisations.

We urge the Government to release all persons imprisoned solely for exercising human rights, including human rights defenders, some of whom have been identified as arbitrarily detained according to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. We also urge the government to appropriately address reports of ill-treatment and torture of prisoners and to ensure an independent, thorough and impartial investigation and prosecution of these cases, as well as of other allegations of human rights violations.

We invite the Government to allow the OHCHR to establish a country office with a full mandate. We further invite the OHCHR to brief the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation and on the follow-up to its technical visit and we will continue to follow closely the developments in Bahrain. We also encourage the Government to further engage with this Council.

This statement has been read in the name of the following countries: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, the United States of America and Uruguay.

Thank you Mr. President.