



Statement of Ireland
43rd session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on
freedom of religion or belief

2 March 2020

Madam President,

Ireland aligns with the statement of the European Union and wishes to add the following.

Ireland thanks the Special Rapporteur, and reaffirms its support for his mandate. In the spirit of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we welcome the focus of the Special Rapporteur on the interplay between freedom of religion or belief, gender equality and non-discrimination.

We share the particular concern of the Special Rapporteur that the rights of women, girls and LGBTBI+ persons continue to be violated, by State and non-state actors, relying on religious 'justifications'. We are further concerned by reports that religion or belief is being increasingly used to deny sexual and reproductive health and rights, criminalise protected conduct and deny the equal personhood of LGBTBI+ persons.

Ireland is committed to promoting freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, advancing gender equality, and combatting gender-based violence. We call on States to fulfil their responsibilities as duty-bearers, ensuring that legal protections for individuals and groups to manifest their religion or belief do not have the effect of denying the rights of any other group, therefore creating a safe and enabling space for women, girls and LGBTBI+ persons to exercise their human rights.

Special Rapporteur, you mentioned in your report your deep concern at accounts that human rights defenders, engaged in combating gender-based discrimination in the area of religion or belief, are suffering stigmatisation and harassment. What do you think the international community can do to combat this worrying trend?

Thank you.