

Human Rights Council – 31th session (29 February – 24 March 2016)

Item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

15 March 2016

Statement by Ireland

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

Mr President

Ireland will this session highlight our concerns regarding the human rights situations in the **DPRK, Myanmar, Syria, Ukraine and Burundi** during interactive dialogues and panel discussions under this and other agenda items. At HRC30 in September 2015 we also expressed our concern regarding the situation in **South Sudan**; we remain deeply concerned in relation to the persistent gross human rights and humanitarian law violations there.

Ireland is very concerned about the situation of religious minorities, including Christians, and the increasing threat to freedom of religion or belief in countries such as **Iraq, Iran and Nigeria**. We urge all States to end and prevent acts of violence committed in the name of religion and to hold accountable those who perpetrate attacks on the basis of religion or belief.

Ireland remains deeply concerned with the shrinking space for civil society and the continued threats against human rights defenders in many countries.

We remain concerned at the continued restrictions on civil society actors in **Azerbaijan**, including the restrictions on human rights defenders and crackdown on independent media.

Regrettably we are also seeing sustained and increasing attacks on freedom of expression in many other parts of the world. In **Turkey**, the recent erosion of the independence of the media is very alarming. Ireland calls on the Government of **Turkey** to abide by its international obligations to respect freedom of expression and to guarantee freedom of the media. In **Belarus**, recent legislative amendments have further restricted freedom of expression, in particular internet freedom. Freedom of expression must be respected both online and offline.

Keeping channels of communication open is key to addressing human rights issues. We are concerned of reports about the possible closure of the OHCHR's office in Moscow and hope that the Office will continue to have a presence there and dialogue with the **Russian** government.

Another issue of great concern is the reports of harassment and intimidation of LGBTI activists and that laws in **Russia** regarding "non-traditional sexual relationships" are being used to intimidate LGBTI activists. The situation for LGBTI persons in some countries in Africa also remains very difficult and Ireland urges the Governments in these countries to reject attempts to further criminalise homosexuality, which may lead to increased attacks, discrimination and abuse.

Ireland deplores the continued and extensive use of the death penalty in **Saudi Arabia** and **Iran**, including in relation to charges that may be politically motivated, cases relating to drug offences, and especially the continued sentencing of juveniles.

Ireland deplores the rise in violent attacks in **Israel and Palestine**, and the relentless policies of land seizures, disappropriation and evictions of Palestinian families which deprive the occupied population of all hope for the future, and contribute so strongly to this deterioration on the ground. Ireland calls on Israel to reverse these policies, and on leaders on all sides to work to end violent attacks.

Thank you