

Statement at 36th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 2: General Debate with the High Commissioner

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Thank you Mr President.

Over the last year, almost 50 States have pledged to be guided by objective criteria in determining whether and how this Council should act on situations of concern.

These criteria include whether the High Commissioner has called for action, and whether the State concerned is facilitating or obstructing humanitarian actors, human rights defenders and independent media.

These principles should be applied with particular rigour in relation to member States, *who are obliged to uphold the highest human rights standards and cooperate fully with the Council.*

Of the numerous member States of this Council cited in the High Commissioner's statement, four stand out as particularly egregious. The situations therein demand that signatories to the Irish-led joint statement on objective criteria at the 32nd session of the Council, and the Dutch-led joint statement on membership standards at the 35th session, take principled action to fulfil their pledges.

In **Burundi**, the arbitrary arrest, disappearance, torture and killing of human rights defenders, together with the State's defiant non-cooperation with a Council-mandated commission, demand action. This session should recommend that the General Assembly resolve to suspend Burundi's Council membership.

In **Egypt**, the repression of civil society, the blocking of hundreds of websites and media outlets, and widespread intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders – *all referred to by the High Commissioner and all early warning signs of gross and systematic violations* – demand individual and collective action in and by the Council.

In the **Philippines**, presidential orders to shoot defenders perceived to 'obstruct justice', as well as attempts to intimidate and smear the Commission for Human Rights, should be met with an unequivocal international response. In the absence of credible domestic investigation of thousands of *extrajudicial* killings, this Council must resolve to investigate and end impunity.

On **Venezuela**, we join the High Commissioner – *and many national, regional and international NGOs* – in calling for the establishment of an international investigation into possible crimes against humanity, *including the 'crushing' of critical voices*'.

Around the world, human rights defenders are paying with their liberty and lives to uphold the of others. In the High Commissioner's words, 'they seek, not power or personal profit; they seek justice'. It is time for the diplomats and governments represented in this room to draw inspiration from their courage and give it to them.

Thank you.