

Human Rights Council 33rd session

ITEM 5 - GENERAL DEBATE, SEPTEMBER 2016

Thank you Mr President,

In his report to the Council, the Secretary General announces that, in light of the increasing number of cases of reprisals, he intends to strengthen and make more regular the collection of information on allegations of intimidation or reprisals. He will use existing staff to take up the issue within the UN system and with States, and to advise the High Commissioner and himself.

This long-awaited, important, and practical step by the S-G will ensure a more systematised and coordinated response to reprisals and intimidation against those who cooperate with the UN.

We strongly encourage the S-G to place this brief in the hands of staff at the highest levels to signal that the issue is of the gravest concern for the UN.

We share the S-G's concern that reprisals and intimidation against those who cooperate with the UN not only devastate the lives of the individuals concerned, and their families, but also have a deterrent effect that may undermine future cooperation.

The Secretary-General's report once again documents several cases of reprisals and intimidation by Council members, or by candidates for membership, even though they are meant to uphold the highest standard of human rights promotion and protection and 'fully cooperate with the Council'. This includes Burundi, China, Iraq, Japan, Morocco, Venezuela and Viet Nam. We urge General Assembly members to take States' records on and responses to allegations of reprisals into account before casting their votes in Council elections.

Notwithstanding the primary duty of States to prevent and redress reprisals, the Council itself is failing to properly discharge its own institutional mandate to promote the full implementation of States' human rights obligations and to review compliance in this regard. Under the leadership of the President, the Council should:

- (1) Implement the S-G's recommendation to 'devote sufficient time to the discussion of the present report' by scheduling a stand-alone interactive dialogue;
- (2) Seek information concerning action taken by States cited in the report to prevent and ensure accountability for reprisals, assess that State's compliance with its human rights obligations and call on that State to take further action where it falls short; and
- (3) Ensure States cited inform the Council regularly and timely of steps taken to investigate cases of reprisals, prosecute perpetrators, and provide remedies to victims.

Thank you.