

## Human Rights Council organisational session

5 December 2016

*Check against delivery - Michael Ineichen*

Thank you Mr President,

As you finish your mandate in a few weeks, ISHR wants to acknowledge your efforts in making the Council more accessible, effective and protective for rights holders.

We also congratulate the incoming President and Bureau on their election, and look forward to working closely with them as we have with you.

ISHR appreciates the opportunity to take the floor today, and wish to make three brief points.

Firstly, we are dismayed that even after 10 years, some States are still challenging the Council's place as the première human rights body of the United Nations. We are gravely concerned at the continuing attempts by the African Group in New York to undermine the mandate of the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, and in so doing attack the integrity of the Council and its decisions. We call on all Geneva missions with a genuine commitment to the mandate, authority and effectiveness of the Council to strongly urge their capitals and New York missions to support that mandate.

Secondly, we appreciate your openness to receiving and working with civil society human rights defenders throughout your term, and call on your successor to continue on that path. In relation to the continued instances of intimidation or reprisals against human rights defenders engaging with the Council or its mechanisms, you have been consistent in your approach of seeking to address all cases brought to your attention. We nevertheless call on you and your successor to increase the level of transparency around all cases raised, including those of previous years. Specifically, we reiterate our call on the President to publish a rolling list of cases, indicating the status of each of them. Where the response of the State concerned is insufficient, we request that the case be formally brought to the attention of the Council for consideration and action.

Thirdly, Mr President, on the occasion of the Council's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we acknowledge important advances such as the Irish joint statement setting out objective criteria for considering Council action, but regret the overall lack of progress. We urge States to show more ambition and leadership to strengthen the Council, building on the concrete, comprehensive blueprint outlined by civil society.

In this regard, we particularly reiterate the call for Council membership standards to be upheld. States should take concrete steps towards the suspension of Burundi, given the combination of its flagrant refusal to cooperate with the UN and the gross and systematic human rights violations. *We believe the Presidency should support such efforts unless and until there is full and good faith cooperation with the recently appointed Commission of Inquiry.*

In closing, we wish you well for the future, and hope you will continue to provide your expertise and diplomatic skill at the disposal of the Council, to ensure it becomes more accessible, effective, protective in the years to come.

Thank you.