

Statement at 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 10: General Debate – Independent Expert on Cote d'Ivoire

Delivered by: Mr. Clement Voule

Thank you Mr President,

ISHR welcomes Mr. Mohammed Ayat's report on Côte d'Ivoire.

The report speaks of a commendable improvement in human rights and governance in the country. In this regard, we applaud the Ivorian government for holding peaceful elections, which for the most part respected human rights and upheld international election standards.

Mr. Ayat, while acknowledging these positive steps, ISHR echoes your recommendations on areas that need improvement. These include: capacity building of the justice system and urging the officials of the National Human Rights Commission of Côte d'Ivoire to take a bolder stand against the human rights violations committed in their country. In this regard, we call on the Ivorian government to review the National Human Rights Commission to ensure that it is compatible with the Paris Principles. You raised this in your previous report and it was also recommended during Côte d'Ivoire's last Universal Periodic Review.

ISHR takes note with concern that you have been forced to recommend 'making the report of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission public as a means of reinforcing the reconciliation' for the second time.

We support your reiteration of this recommendation and want to explicitly draw the attention of the Ivorian authorities to the fact that the failure to publish the report denies human rights defenders an important source of information for their work with victims of the 2010 post-election crisis.

ISHR and human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire call on the Ivorian government to take the necessary steps to adopt the draft decree that operationalises the Ivorian human rights defender law. This draft decree is currently with the Ministry of Human Rights.

Mr President, we welcome the statement made by Côte d'Ivoire delegation on the obligation of state to protect human rights defenders. However, we were deeply disappointed by Côte d'Ivoire's abstention on the recent General Assembly resolution on human rights defenders. As a first country in Africa to adopt a human rights defenders protection law, this position is inconsistent with the government commitment for the protection of defenders at home and abroad. We call on the Ivorian authorities to align their domestic commitment to human rights defenders with their foreign policy, including international and crucial fora such as the General Assembly and Human Rights Council.

ISHR strongly believes that promoting and protecting human rights defenders must not only be a domestic priority, but must be complemented by principled international actions. We look forward to Côte d'Ivoire's strong support for, and co-sponsorship of, the defenders resolution being considered at this session.