

## Statement at 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council

### Item 4: General Debate – China

Thank you, Mr Vice President.

Human rights defenders and civil society globally are facing worsening restrictions and attacks, including in, but by no means limited to, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Burundi, Egypt, Russia, Sudan, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela.

The High Commissioner, UN experts and States – jointly and individually – have drawn our attention during this session to the deteriorating situation of human rights in China. This is an important step – but nonetheless insufficient to combat the comprehensive crackdown now taking place in the country.

Lawyers and human rights defenders in China face nearly insurmountable challenges. Even the most basic rights of the accused – for example, to be innocent until found guilty – are violated by such trends as televised confessions and systematic refusals to allow detained defenders to meet their lawyers or their families. This has a ripple effect, discouraging dissent and defaming those who protect human rights.

In short, we see in China an unprecedented, systematic, and ongoing assault on civil society. This requires an extraordinary response from the international community, including this Council. China, as a current member, should live up to the pledges it made before joining. We urge the Chinese government to take concrete measures to improve the human rights situation before it concludes its term this year. If not, as civil society has said on many occasions, the Council itself has an obligation to act.

First, China must halt its crackdown on human rights defenders; the international community should continue to call for release of those detained and arrested. More attention is needed on such practices as prolonged pretrial detention, residential surveillance in police designated place, and the use of black jails, in many cases amounting to enforced disappearance.

Even when released, defenders are often treated as criminal suspects – placed under surveillance, prevented from traveling within and outside the country, and pressured to self-censor.

Second, China must scrap legislation that further limits the space for civil society. With the draft Foreign NGO Management Law and the Charities Law, Chinese officials are moving to impose strict regulations on the operations a wide range of organisations and prevent independent domestic NGOs from obtaining funding. The newly passed National Security Law and Counterterrorism Law have far-reaching provisions that violate fundamental rights to association and expression, and that legitimise the actions of public security authorities to silence defenders.

Your action and continued concern are desperately needed, including for detained defenders Wang Yu and Bao Longjun, for Liu Xia, Liu Xiaobo, Guo Feixiong, and Xu Zhiyong, for Li Heping and Gao Yue and Zhao Wei, Chen Yunfei, Tang Jingling, Yuan Xingting, Wang Qingying, Su Changlan, Liu Ping, Yu Shiwen. For Wang Quanzhang, Liu Sixin, Zhou Shifeng. For Tang Zhishun and Xing Qingxian, Zhang Kai

and Zhang Congzhu. For Mi Chongbiao, Ding Jiayi, He Xiaobo, Jia Lingmin, Zeng Feiyang. Li Guozhi, Chen Wei, Chen Xi, Xie Yang, Xie Yanyi, Wu Gen, Li Shuyan, Li Chunfu, Hu Shigen, Liu Yongping, Gou Hongguo, Huang Wenxun, Tufu Wugan, Gu Yuesi, Lin Bin, Wang Fang, and Yin Xu'an.

Thank you.