

Human Rights Council 43rd session

ITEM 6 - ADOPTION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) OF FIJI

12 March 2020

Speaker: Diego Villanueva

Thank you, Mr. President

This is a joint statement with Rainbow Pride Foundation.

We welcome Fiji's acceptance of recommendations *from Switzerland and Albania* to ensure human rights defenders can freely carry out their legitimate activities, including by implementing the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders at the national level.

During the previous UPR, Fiji accepted three recommendations related to the protection of defenders, and since then conditions have improved. Defenders now operate in a relatively free environment.

Nevertheless, there are reports of peaceful protesters being arbitrarily arrested and journalists harassed and intimidated. The rights to freedom of expression and assembly continue to be limited and more needs to be done to ensure an enabling environment for defenders.

We echo recommendations that Fiji repeal all laws and policies that restrict the fundamental rights of freedom of expression, assembly, and association. These include sections of the Public Order Act Amendment Decree, the Media Industry Development Decree, the 2014 Electoral Decree and the Online Safety Bill.

We want to highlight the rights of defenders working for the promotion and protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. The Constitution bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. However, as the Rainbow Pride Foundation reported, 'LGBTI human rights defenders continue to face multiple levels of threats and sexual harassment.'

We join Argentina and France in recommending that Fiji enhance efforts to combat acts of discrimination and violence against LGBTI persons, and guarantee that all such acts are investigated and punished. To this end, we urge Fiji to incorporate sexual orientation into anti-discrimination laws and take measures to reduce the targeting and harassment of LGBTI human rights defenders.

Thank you, Mr. President.