

## Human Rights Council 33<sup>rd</sup> session

*Check against delivery*

### ITEM 3 – GENERAL DEBATE, 16 SEPTEMBER 2016

Mr President,

ISHR welcomes the *special procedures*' latest [joint communications report](#),<sup>1</sup> which provides a troubling picture of threats and attacks against *civil society actors and human rights defenders across all regions, whose work and safety is critical to healthy societies that respect human rights and the rule of law.*

Mr President, *as the guardian of the Council's founding texts*, we look to you to ensure full cooperation with the Council's mechanisms. Among the more than 52 States listed in the present [joint communications report](#) as having yet to respond to at least one initial communication *alleging rights violations*, 19 are Council members. We urge you to request updates from Bangladesh, Burundi, Congo (DRC), Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Venezuela and Viet Nam on the status of these communications.

*Council members are required under GA Resolution 60/251 to 'fully cooperate with the Council.' A lack of timely and substantive response to Special Procedures not only undermines the integrity of this forum, but is plainly incompatible with membership.*

*Moreover, full cooperation is not limited to replying to letters. As the case of COPINH demonstrates in Honduras, States may respond to communications, but without taking concrete action to change the situation on the ground, human rights defenders will continue to be victims of threats, violence and assassination.*

This session also considers the report on the Council's tenth anniversary panel *held in June*. Without further individual and collective leadership, States will squander the *historic* opportunity of making the Council more accessible, effective and protective.

*In this regard*, we welcome the participation earlier this week of the majority of candidates in Geneva's first event to discuss the visions *and aspirations* of potential new Council members, bringing much needed transparency to the election process. *At the same time*, we regret that a minority chose not to face questions *on their pledges – or their performance in the case of existing members* – thus depriving GA members of the opportunity to cast a more informed vote in October.

We nevertheless call on all members of the GA to only vote for States which uphold the highest human rights standards at home, and cooperate with the Council. Several of this year's candidates clearly fall short even of these basic requirements.

We also look to *current and future* members of the Council to formally pledge to bring a situation to the Council's attention based on objective criteria and if flagged by a range of expert voices external to the Council, *including the High Commissioner, the Secretary-General, or Special Procedures*. *In this regard*, we welcome and encourage the swift operationalization of the end-of-session statement delivered by Ireland *on behalf of more than 30 States in June*.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Document No. A/HRC/33/32, [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/33/32](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/33/32).