

## Human Rights Council – 30<sup>th</sup> session (14 September – 2 October 2015)

### Statement by Ireland during the final meeting of HRC 30

2 October 2015

Mr President

Ireland wishes to make some concluding remarks about an aspect of the 30<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council which has caused us some concern.

The vital importance of an independent, diverse and pluralistic civil society to democratic societies and respect for human rights has been recognised repeatedly not alone in this Council but in various fora at all levels.

Civil society has an important role to play in addressing and resolving challenges and issues important to society in a whole range of areas. Its ability to empower all persons and to provide other perspectives can have a positive, transformative effect on and in societies.

We are concerned about a number of developments and trends relating to civil society this session.

First, and as expressed in the General Comment on behalf of a group of States under item 3, Ireland is deeply concerned by the language of op 9 of L.25/Rev 1 on **Violent Extremism** as adopted. The manner in which this paragraph purports to limit civil society to acting in accordance with national strategies does not respect the important role of an independent, diverse and pluralistic civil society in addressing human rights issues.

We were also disappointed that the oral revisions to draft resolution L.22/Rev 1 on Advisory services and technical assistance to **Cambodia** led to a text which did not reflect the real concerns regarding the recently adopted Law on Associations and Non Governmental Organisations in Cambodia. We have heard the advice of two Special Rapporteurs that this law poses a clear threat to civil society and the exercise of a number of fundamental freedoms and we are disappointed that the Council could not more clearly address this point.

Mr President

In other cases, while elements on civil society were included in drafts before us, we regret that they are not as complete as they should be, or in some cases fell short of previously agreed language.

In this regard we refer, for example, to the **Presidential Statement on Health**, which recognizes the vital role of civil society in responding to pandemics. It was disappointing that it was not possible to take the obvious next step – as the UN General Assembly has done by consensus - of encouraging close cooperation between member states, the private sector and civil society; or - as this Council has done by consensus - to urge states to create and maintain a safe and enabling role for civil society in law and practice.

More positively, a number of other resolutions before us included clear and appropriate references. We particularly support the fact that, pursuant to the Regional Arrangements resolution, a workshop will be organized in 2016 for OHCHR and regional organisations to discuss the topic of cooperation with civil society and human rights defenders.

Mr President

This is an issue of relevance and importance across all agenda items of this Council and more particularly still, to the impact of the Council on the ground. We urge all States to fully support and positively recognize the vital role of civil society at all levels in preventing violations and empowering victims.

Thank you