

Human Rights Council 31st session (29 February-24 March)

Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on Burundi

Statement by Ireland

21 March 2016

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and adds the following.

Mr President,

Ireland thanks the participants for their updates and in particular, we welcome Pierre Claver Mbonimpa's presence in the Council today.

Ireland is extremely concerned that despite efforts to encourage a resolution of the crisis, the reality for those living in Burundi remains largely unchanged. Targeted assassinations, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and unacceptable restrictions on freedom of expression and civil and political rights continue to occur with impunity. We are particularly concerned by the documented cases of sexual violence perpetrated by the security forces during house searches. The humanitarian situation is also of great concern, including for the 260,000 refugees who have fled Burundi and have been granted refuge in neighbouring countries.

Ireland welcomes the positive steps taken by the Government, notably commitments to release prisoners, cancel arrest warrants, re-open two media outlets and restart the inter-Burundian dialogue. We further welcome the granting of access to UN and AU human rights monitors. This is a vital step in ensuring the human rights of the Burundian people are respected.

However, we are conscious that many of the Government's commitments remain unfulfilled, and must yet translate into concrete progress on the ground. The Government has a responsibility to guarantee the human rights of all its citizens; to ensure the security forces uphold the rule-of-law at all times; and to put an end to the culture of impunity that currently pervades Burundi by promptly investigating all alleged abuses. We encourage the Government of Burundi to implement the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders' recommendations to fully investigate any harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, and ensure independent radio stations can operate freely.

A long-term solution to the crisis is only possible through an inter-Burundian dialogue with *all* relevant actors. Ireland welcomes the appointment by the East African Community of former Tanzanian President, Benjamin Mkapa, as Head of the Facilitation Team and we are hopeful that the dialogue can restart without delay.

We urge the Government of Burundi, now a member of the Human Rights Council, to live up to its responsibility to protect the human rights of all of its citizens and to commit to urgently resolve the crisis.

Thank you.