

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

General Debate under item 2

Statement by Ireland

23 March

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and wishes to add the following.

Mr President,

Ireland welcomes the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Colombia. We note the importance of the peace process to the achievement of human rights objectives, and applaud progress towards an historic peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP.

Ireland commends the excellent work of the Colombia Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and strongly supports the renewal of its mandate beyond 31 October 2016. As noted in its annual report, the sustainability of peace will depend on Colombia overcoming the enormous divide in human rights enjoyment between rural and urban areas, between men and women, and between different population and ethnic groups. Ireland urges the Government of Colombia to engage in meaningful participative processes with civil society to jointly find solutions to these challenges.

Ireland welcomes the recognition of the centrality of victims and their rights in the negotiations and hopes that the Integrated Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Recurrence System will provide an opportunity for meaningful promotion of victims' rights. We commend the support that the OHCHR has offered in this regard. However Ireland remains concerned by attacks and harassment of human rights defenders and supports the call of the OHCHR for greater national preventive and protective action to protect human rights defenders.

As stated in the report, the peace process provides numerous challenges but greater opportunities to improve human rights enjoyment. The OHCHR has a key role to play in helping to generate the conditions necessary to overcome past conflict-related violations and structural human rights problems. Its role will become increasingly important in the period immediately following the signing of a peace accord, and this will create significant additional workloads which it will be necessary to resource adequately.

All three complementary aspects of UN action – peace, development, and human rights – will be crucial in helping to achieve sustainable peace in Colombia and Ireland looks forward to continuing to support the OHCHR in carrying out its work.

Thank you.