

**Human Rights Council - 26<sup>th</sup> session**  
(10<sup>th</sup> June – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014)

**Clustered Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Assembly and of Association**

**10 June 2014**

**Statement by Ireland**

Thank you Mr. President.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union.

We welcome both the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and thank them for their Reports and presentations today. We have a number of comments and questions for both.

**Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression**

First, Ireland sincerely thanks the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression for his outstanding contribution to the protection of human rights throughout his six years as mandate-holder.

We welcome his Report on freedom of opinion and expression in electoral contexts, one of several valuable Reports presented during his time in his role. It is fitting that many issues studied in previous Reports are relevant to his presentation today, for instance

- the responsibility of States to prohibit incitement to hatred, hostility, discrimination and violence;
- the protection of journalists from violence; and
- the right to access information.

Ireland strongly agrees with the Special Rapporteur that the right to freedom of opinion and expression is a central pillar of democratic societies. We also agree that, as stated in General Comment 34, it is essential for the promotion and protection of all human rights. We welcome the Special Rapporteur's emphasis on promoting plurality, transparency and accountability, given their indispensability to democratic society.

In his Report, the Special Rapporteur recommends that electoral authorities receive sufficient resources and powers to carry out their duties. *Could the Special Rapporteur elaborate on this recommendation in terms of measures that such authorities should take once they have the necessary resources and powers?*

**Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association**

Turning to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, which focuses on groups at risks:

It is clear that these rights are of particular importance for marginalised or at-risk groups, to permit them to voice their concerns and claim their rights. As the Special Rapporteur states, the consequences of failing to allow vulnerable groups to do so may be severe and place them at even greater risk.

Ireland shares the Special Rapporteur's concern regarding the decreasing space for civil society actors. Ireland is particularly concerned by references in the Report to funding restrictions on civil society actors, with the effect of limiting freedom of assembly and of association. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 24/21 on Civil Society Space, adopted by consensus last year, Ireland emphasises "the urgent need to prevent and stop the use" of measures and provisions, including on funding, "to hinder the work... of civil society".

In his Report, the Special Rapporteur emphasises not only the need to protect the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association but also to facilitate these rights. *In this respect, we would be grateful if the Special Rapporteur could provide examples of best practice in relation to facilitating the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association of groups at risk?*

Thank you Mr. President.