

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

General Debate Item 10: Technical assistance and capacity-building

Statement by Ireland

23 March 2016

Ireland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and adds the following.

Mr President

The agenda of the Human Rights Council is carefully constructed, in keeping with the institutional framework agreed by all States in its establishment. We work, quite appropriately, under a broad range of items, covering both thematic and country-specific; structural and otherwise.

The consideration of country-specific issues is a valid and entirely necessary part of our work, both under item 4 and item 10. Item 4 is a critical and sadly all-too-necessary part of the work of the Council, particularly for the gravest situations and/or those where the State concerned is unable or unwilling to improve the state of human rights protection in its territory.

However item 10 on technical cooperation and assistance is also of great importance. While not appropriate to all situations, item 10 provides a useful framework where a State wishes to improve its protection of human rights and is eager to cooperate with international partners in that regard. No State has a perfect record on human rights and to seek practical assistance in this way is a sign of strength, not of weakness.

In that spirit, Ireland wishes to commend **Honduras** for having recently sought technical assistance from OHCHR, in response to the murder of human rights defender and environmentalist Berta Cáceres. We condemn this killing unreservedly, as well as that of her colleague and fellow human rights defender Nelson García which tragically also occurred during this session of the Human Rights Council. We welcome the commitment of the Government of Honduras to carry out a full investigation, as required under international human rights law, and look forward to hearing of progress in this regard.

More generally, we view these killings as a reminder of the intimidation, attacks and reprisals against human rights defenders in all regions of the world. We include in this the many cases of which sadly we do not hear, of defenders attacked or pressured by Governments or non-state actors, but whose names do not become known at an international level.

That reality is a call to action for all States to do more to acknowledge and raise awareness of the important and legitimate role of human rights defenders. We strongly urge all States, in that regard, to support the draft resolution on human rights defenders which will this week come before the Council for adoption, as tabled and without amendment.

Thank you