

Human Rights Council – 31st session

Interactive Dialogue on High Commissioner Oral Report on Ukraine

Statement by Ireland

22 March 2016

Ireland aligns itself with the remarks made on behalf of the EU and adds the following.

Mr President,

Ireland wishes to express its appreciation for this important update on the situation in Ukraine. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine continues to fulfill an important role in documenting human rights violations in Ukraine and the OHCHR's most recent report, its thirteenth iteration since the beginning of the current crisis, provides another vital, thorough and independent assessment of human rights violations in Ukraine.

Despite the welcome reduction of active hostilities in recent months, it is clear that the conflict in eastern Ukraine remains volatile and that an extensive array of human rights abuses continue to be perpetrated. Previous OHCHR reports documented substantial evidence of killings, abductions, torture, arbitrary detention, sexual violence and extortion in separatist-controlled areas. Unfortunately, the latest report demonstrates that the conflict continues to seriously adversely affect the resident population.

Despite the relative easing in systemic violence, the civilian population, in particular those living in areas under the control of separatists, continue to bear the greatest burden of the hostilities. The protraction of the conflict will only further the physical, social and political isolation of communities caught in the divide, perpetuating the vulnerability of human rights in the region and complicating the restoration of basic protections. The welfare of the three million people living in the affected areas must be the primary concern both of the conflict parties and for the international community. It is an obligation that humanitarian access be guaranteed to those who require it.

The Minsk Agreements continue to offer the only viable framework for the peaceful, political resolution of this conflict, although significant progress on their implementation can only begin when the first point of the Minsk “Package of Measures” is achieved: respect for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire. Until this is achieved, the potential for a re-escalated conflict will continue to loom over the region.

As we have recently passed the second anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea, it is extremely regrettable that the situation with regard to human rights on the peninsula continues to markedly deteriorate. The disproportionate targeting of Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians and other minority groups is simply unacceptable.

Ireland would also like to ask for an assessment of the efforts being made to assist and protect IDPs in Ukraine.

Thank you.