

Human Rights Council- 15th June to 3rd July- 29th Session

**Interactive Session with the Commission of Enquiry on the situation of
Human Rights in Eritrea**

24 June 2015

Mr President,

Ireland aligns itself with the remarks delivered by the European Union.

Ireland welcomes the report from the Commission of Enquiry and would like to thank all the members of the Commission here today for the important work they have undertaken since the establishment of the Commission in June 2014.

We are deeply disturbed that members of the Commission have been subjected to threats and intimidation in the execution of their mandate, including during their time in Geneva as described by the President yesterday, and we strongly condemn such action.

We commend the Commission on the quality of the report. We note that the disturbing evidence presented is based on a painstaking and detailed process of evidence gathering comprising 550 confidential interviews conducted and 160 written submissions received across 8 countries. We appreciate that this has been a sensitive investigation which has been conducted with due regard to issues of gender, culture and security.

The principles underpinning the work of the Commission – independence, impartiality, objectivity, transparency and integrity - are all evidenced in the excellent report which is being presented here today.

We pay tribute to all of those who provided information directly to the Commission, assisting it to discharge its mandate. It is vital that the voices of the victims are heard in this Council.

We are disappointed that the Government of Eritrea has refused to co-operate with the Commission and permit access to the country to assess the situation firsthand.

We are gravely concerned with the evidence presented on the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations that have been and are being committed in Eritrea under the authority of the Government. In particular we

are disturbed by the assertion that some of these violations may constitute crimes against humanity and note the call for further investigation.

We call on the Eritrean Government to respect their international human rights obligations, acknowledge the existence of these violations and take steps to ensure accountability for crimes committed.

The pervasive control systems imposed in the country are particularly invidious. As the Commission has said, heavy consequences for perceived deviant behaviours, including lifetime incarceration or death, have created an environment of self-censorship whereby individuals no longer trust anyone – not even their own family.

- *Are there ways in which States and UN mechanisms can follow-up on the recent UPR, in order to attempt to improve the situation on the ground in Eritrea?*
- *Could the Commission give its views on how the international community can ensure accountability for human rights violations in Eritrea?*