

Universal Periodic Review – 20th Session
Statement by Ireland on the review of Fiji

29 October 2014

Ireland welcomes the high level delegation of Fiji and thanks it for its presentation and constructive approach to this review.

We note with appreciation some positive developments since the first cycle of the UPR, including first steps towards democratic reform by way of parliamentary elections and a constitutional reform process, as well as concrete measures such as the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex relations.

However we have a number of concerns, including the persistence of violence against women and also the level of cooperation by Fiji with Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council – including the fact that 6 Special Procedures are awaiting responses to visit requests and in particular that, despite acceptance of a recommendation in that regard during the first UPR cycle, a visit by the Special Rapporteur on independence of judges and lawyers has not yet been facilitated. We urge Fiji to cooperate fully with all Special Procedures by facilitating visits and responding promptly to their communications.

Ireland is concerned by significant restrictions on freedom of expression in Fiji, including under the 2013 Constitution and in practice. We share the concern expressed by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression with respect to the chilling effect on news media of the 2010 Media Decree. Accordingly, Ireland **recommends** that Fiji take steps to bring domestic law and practice into line with existing international human rights standards in relation to freedom of expression, including media freedom.

Ireland also expresses concern regarding the effect of the 2012 Public Order Amendment Decree on the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as well as reports of arrests and intimidation of peaceful protestors, particularly those advocating for trade union rights. We echo the call of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association that no person should be criminalised for the peaceful exercise of fundamental freedoms. Ireland **recommends** that Fiji create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for all civil society actors to freely associate, by amending relevant laws and ensuring they are not invoked to curtail the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

Thank you