

Draft elements for joint statement under item 6 on civil society and NGOs' participation

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of 58 countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom and Uruguay).

We reaffirm our support for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) as one of the most important mechanisms of the international system for the protection and promotion of human rights. We consider universality, transparency, non selectivity, inclusiveness and equal treatment as its pillars, allowing for an objective and periodic revision in an atmosphere of respect and mutual cooperation.

Human Rights Council Resolutions 5/1 and 16/21 acknowledge the positive contribution of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights in the framework of the UPR process by providing specifically for NGOs to actively participate. We have been witnessing their very constructive participation and we praise inclusive processes of consultation between Governments and civil society which could build on in moving collectively the national human rights agenda forward.

Many States have favored the involvement of civil society, i.a. by inviting NGOs representatives to participate with comments and inputs in the process of preparation of national reports and also in the follow-up by consulting them or working with them on the implementation of UPR recommendations. We are convinced that the mechanism has been enriched by their contributions.

On the other hand, we would like to express our deep concerns for those cases in which the civil society participation in or follow-up to the UPR process has been threatened in various ways.

Everyone has the right to unhindered access to and communication with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, including the universal periodic review mechanism. In this regard, we reiterate the need for all States to ensure a safe and enabling environment in which all members of society, including human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, can operate free from insecurity. We also reiterate the need for the States to refrain from or prevent, and prosecute as needed, any act of intimidation or reprisals against those who cooperate, have cooperated or seek to cooperate with international institutions, including their family members and associates.

Finally, we encourage States to engage in a genuine dialogue with civil society representatives as a way of advancing human rights at all levels.

Thank you