

## **I. Introduction**

Thank you Mr. President.

Distinguished representatives,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address the Human Rights Council on the occasion of the adoption of report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review on the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

### ***The dialogue session***

As you indicated, Mr. President, the review of the Kingdom of the Netherlands was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2017. The delegation was headed by the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands, Mr. Ronald Plasterk.

The representatives of all four countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, namely the Netherlands, Aruba, St. Maarten and Curaçao were part of the delegation to engage in the interactive dialogue on behalf of their Governments as each of the countries is responsible for the implementation of its obligations stemming from the different human rights conventions.

A list of questions prepared in advance by Belgium, Germany, Mexico, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was transmitted to the Netherlands through the troika. These questions - available on the extranet of the UPR - were very much appreciated by the delegation of the Kingdom. They made the preparation of the hearing more focused en thereby more effective. The Netherlands support the continuation of this very good practise.

We appreciated the interactive dialogue, where 89 delegations made statements. Recommendations made during the dialogue were attached to the report of the Kingdom of the Netherlands which was adopted by the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review at the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 12 May 2017.

### ***Recommendations***

The Kingdom received 203 recommendations. Most of them concerned the country of the Netherlands of the Kingdom. The Recommendations concerned the many topics which were dealt with during the hearing in May. They focused on the human rights institutional infrastructure, and many legislative and policy measures. We appreciated the constructive manner in which most of these recommendations were made.

The Netherlands received a great deal of support in continuing different action plans, among which the National Action Plan on Human Rights. Many recommendations concerned more specifically non-discrimination, children's rights, migrants rights and hate crime. In that context, the Netherlands was urged to continue the strategic and systematic approach to tackling discrimination and hate crimes on, among others, the grounds of race, ethnic origin, nationality, and religion. With the further implementation of the National Action Programme Against Discrimination the government of the Netherlands aims to give specific follow-up to among others these recommendations with both preventive and repressive measures.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands received several recommendations related to business and human rights. The Netherlands is committed to preventing and remedying the involvement of Dutch companies in human rights abuses and will continue its efforts in this regard, in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and its National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

***Reaction to recommendations***

We have taken and studied the recommendations very seriously. The 8<sup>th</sup> of September the Netherlands shared the responses to the recommendations to Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' office. As most of the recommendations were addressed to the country of the Netherlands they were also responded to by the Netherlands. This with the exception of seven recommendations (131.25, 131.26, 131.117, 131.123, 131.154, 131.199 and 131.203), which have been responded to by the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a whole (The Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten).

As mentioned in the document transmitted to the OHCHR, the horrible hurricane Irma struck Sint Maarten recently. Due to these extreme circumstances and the damages caused by Irma in Sint Maarten, the government of Sint Maarten could not participate in finalizing this response of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UPR recommendations. Although its viewpoints have been incorporated into the response, rectifications from the government of Sint Maarten may follow.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands accepted 105 recommendations, another 97 recommendations are noted. In our written response, our aim was to clarify our position and our reasons for adopting or noting resolutions as clearly as possible.

For instance, three recommendations (131.5, 131.6, 131.7) related to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR are noted. The reason for this is that the Government is currently studying the advice it has requested from the Council of State on an enabling draft law. A decision on ratification of OP-ICESCR will then be taken by the next Dutch Government.

Other recommendations have been accepted, for instance recommendations 41 and 42 pertaining to strengthening national policy to decrease the gender wage gap as well as 13 recommendations related to combatting hate crime and hate speech.

### ***Follow-up***

The Parliament of the country of the Netherlands has been informed of this reaction and is involved with the further follow-up of these UPR recommendations, including in the period between the submission of this response and the adoption of the outcome of the UPR of the Netherlands by the Human Rights Council.

Not only the parliament of the Netherlands is involved with the UPR-process, also stakeholders such as the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights and human rights NGO's are so. I am pleased that representatives of these organizations are also here today. They have made important contributions to our UPR-pre-session, and we will need them for the follow-up process as critical watch dogs and constructive partners.

We now look forward to this session today and to hearing additional views expressed by the honourable delegates and NGO's present in this room. We will come back later with some concluding remarks.

Thank you Mr. President.