



Promoting and strengthening
the Universal Periodic Review
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United Nations Human Rights Council: 30th Session
Oral statement Item 6 – General Debate
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Mr. Vice-President,

Civil society engagement is part and parcel of the universal periodic review. Since its inception, the UPR has created many opportunities for civil society to advance human rights. The mechanism has also enabled cooperation between governments and civil society. Since 2008, trust has been built and dialogues have been made possible in many countries thanks to this process. In the coming weeks, *UPR Info* will notably participate in such dialogues in Malawi and Mongolia on the implementation of recommendations adopted yesterday. The UPR brings new opportunities for governments that want to improve their human rights record.

Mr Vice-President,

We however must acknowledge that there have been cases of reprisals for NGOs working with the UPR. As shown in the Secretary-General's report presented at this Council session, participating in the UPR can, in certain countries, lead to threat, intimidation, smear campaigns, interrogation or arrest.

At *UPR Info*, we have always believed in the value of transparency in the mechanism. This value is notably at the core of the organisation of our "pre-sessions": We have always invited the country under review to attend and meet its national NGOs. We believe that NGOs should be able to speak publicly about human rights, free from any reprisals.

We are therefore extremely worried to learn that some of the participants in our last pre-sessions in April 2015 have faced intimidations and threats for their work on the UPR. These attacks contradict the spirit of the UPR and tarnish the reputation of the so-called "crown jewel" of the Council.

Mr. Vice-President,

We welcome the work of the Bureau to support defenders. We also welcome the statement made by Ghana earlier this week on behalf of 56 States acknowledging that States have the primary duty to prevent reprisals, and that the Council has a 'legal duty to address reprisals'.

We therefore call on all States to uphold their promises and facilitate and support NGO engagement in the UPR process.

I thank you.