

Human Rights Council 34th session

Speaker: Michael Ineichen - Check against delivery

ITEM 5 – HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES AND MECHANISMS

ISHR welcomes the joint statement delivered earlier on the issue of reprisals, and the appointment by the then SG of the new ASG Andrew Gilmour as the first high-level official to end all intimidation and reprisals against those cooperating with the UN on human rights.

We expect ASG Gilmour to ensure his position is visible and accessible to rights holders, and to develop a public facing policy so that victims know how to submit information, and what to expect as a response.

Those accessing the mandate should be kept regularly apprised of the status of their case – lack of transparency, information and updates is a common feature of the various human rights communications mechanisms and procedures which needs to be addressed.

We hope Mr Gilmour will actively seek inputs on allegations of reprisals from all relevant UN bodies and agencies to strengthen the UN wide awareness and response to the issue.

Finally, given consent of victims, we hope to see a publicly accessible database of cases and correspondence, and a presentation of the annual report to the Council and the Third Committee by the ASG himself. This should include all open or unresolved cases, even where the State has not responded or provided any follow up information.

Mr President, with regards to your own legal duty to prevent and address cases of reprisals, could you give an update on any steps you and the Bureau have taken since assuming office to ensure accountability for the disappearance, arbitrary detention, and ultimately death of Chinese human rights defender Cao Shunli. She died three years ago last Tuesday, and no one has been held responsible.

Turning to the joint communications report of Special Procedures, we welcome the efforts of mandate holders and OHCHR to make it more easily searchable as an important step towards providing more visibility of the cases contained therein, however, further dialogue with civil society could help refine the methodology. We also request a standalone interactive dialogue on communications at each session of the Council.

In closing, we reiterate our call on States to respond to communications in a timely and substantive manner. Many States are listed in the present joint communications report as having yet to respond to at least one communication alleging rights violations. 20 current non-responders are Council members. We thus urge you to request speedy updates non-responders, including from Bangladesh, Burundi, Brazil, China, Congo, Croatia, Egypt, your own country El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United States and Venezuela.

Thank you.