Thank you, Mr President.

ISHR is concerned by clear gaps between the obligations of Council members and their actions to silence dissent and suppress the work of human rights defenders.

No matter what issues they work on, or where, or with whom, or how defined, individuals and organisations protecting and promoting human rights in China are at risk.

Defenders deserve full respect of the rights recognised in the UN Charter, the UDHR and their government’s international obligations, just like anyone else.

They do **not** deserve to be subject to surveillance, residential or otherwise, forced eviction or travel bans; to be deprived of access to their families or to lawyers of their own choosing; to be forcibly disappeared or subjected to torture.

They do **not** deserve to be criminalised for their exercise of free speech as ‘picking quarrels’, or peaceful assembly as ‘disturbing public order’, or work to defend religious minorities as ‘subversion of state power’.

They do **not** deserve to be targeted for seeking dialogue on human rights with their country, and with the international community, but none can be here today.

**Xie Yang**, detained over 18 months without trial, admitted to his lawyer Chen:

‘To get [the interrogation] over with, I wrote whatever they wanted me to write. I completely broke down… they used my family and child to threaten me’.

**Chen** himself wrote in an open letter:

‘I want to live to see the universal values of democracy, liberty, rule of law, and human rights realised in China... If something unexpected happens to me, please know that it will absolutely not be because I committed suicide’.

**Xie’s** wife, with three other women whose spouses are detained, also has a message:

‘Human rights lawyers are the pride of China and should be set free immediately’.

We echo this call, and urge the Chinese government to conduct transparent investigations into allegations of torture, to cease the abuse of state secrets charges, and to take seriously concerns raised by the High Commissioner and the members and observers of this Council.