

70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Mr. Maina Kiai

Statement by Ireland

27 October 2015

Mr Kiai,

Ireland warmly welcomes you and re-affirms our strong support for your mandate. We extend our sincere appreciation for your tireless work to promote and protect the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

Ireland welcomes your comparative research on the inequitable treatment by States of associations when compared with business enterprises. Laws and practices regulating registration, taxes, political activity, auditing and reporting have in many cases stifled associations while favouring businesses and commercial activities. The findings are representative of a more general global trend toward greater restriction on civil society activities across the world. It is essential for States, for both the promotion of the freedom of association and sustainable economic development, that the concept of sectoral equity be adopted, where both businesses and associations are treated equitably.

Mr Kiai,

Ireland shares your concern regarding the growing influence of business enterprises over governments and decision-making. It is essential that States facilitate civil societies' access to participation in high level decision-making processes, in particular through regular dialogue with civil society, effective consultation mechanisms and the regulation of lobbying practices. Increased civil society participation in decision-making processes needs to also be applied at a multilateral level where corporate interests have begun to exert a greater influence. Ireland has recently enacted the Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015, to ensure greater transparency and equity across all lobbyists seeking to influence public decision-making.

Mr Kiai,

Ireland welcomes your timely report on the concept of sectoral equity between businesses and NGOs. We welcome your conclusion that a vibrant civil society is essential for sustainable economic development, and that businesses benefit from an empowered civil society sector. Could you give examples of how this concept of sectoral equity can be incorporated through the business and human rights agenda, in particular through the development of national action plans which give effect to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights?