

Human Rights Council – 28th Session (2-27 March 2015)

Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the Independent Expert on Foreign Debt

Statement by Ireland

09 March 2015

Mr President,

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and adds the following.

Ireland would like to thank both Independent Experts for their presentations today.

Ireland congratulates the Independent Expert on human rights and the environment on his third report to the Council. We commend him for adopting an inclusive approach in compiling this report, and, in particular, for his extensive consultations with civil society.

Ireland shares many of the good practices outlined in this report. For example, domestic legislation provides for the right of everyone to access environmental information. A decision must be made on any such request for information within one month and there is a right to appeal.

We share the view of the Independent Expert that private actors have a responsibility to respect human rights. We note that the report identifies implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, including with respect to activities that may affect the environment, as an example of good practice. In this regard, we are pleased to inform the Council that Ireland is in the process of drafting a National Plan on Business and Human Rights.

Ireland recognises that climate change, the environment and human rights are all inextricably linked. Following the Council's full-day discussion on human rights and climate change last Friday, Ireland is pleased to note that the report contains examples of good practices which States have adopted to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Whilst, undoubtedly, much more needs to be done in this context, we appreciate the report's practical focus in identifying good practices which can assist in the promotion and protection of human rights in environmental and climate change policy.

Finally, we note concerns raised in the report that threats against environmental human rights defenders appear to be increasing. Ireland reiterates that all human rights defenders, including those defending environmental and land rights, must be allowed to operate in a safe and enabling environment, free from hindrance and insecurity. In this context, we commend efforts undertaken by civil society to protect environmental defenders which have been identified as good practices in the report.

Our question relates to this topic of human rights defenders:

Could the Independent Expert share his views on good practices which States could adopt to better support and protect human rights defenders, particularly those working on environmental and land issues?

Thank you