

**71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Third Committee**

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

**Statement by Ireland
28 October 2016**

Mr Chair,

Ireland would like to extend our appreciation to the Special Rapporteur, Professor Heiner Bielefeldt, for his latest interim report on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. We also wish to thank him for the outstanding work he has done over the past six years to promote freedom of religion or belief and for retaining this important mandate until Dr. Shaheed can take up the post.

Ireland is deeply concerned by the continued discrimination, intimidation and systematic harassment of members of Muslim, Christian and Baha'i communities, as well as those belonging to non-traditional religious or belief movements. We strongly condemn acts of persecution committed on the basis of religion or belief.

We welcome the Special Rapporteur's analysis of the root causes underlying violations and share his view that intolerant interpretations of religions usually result from a broad set of political, social, economic and historical factors. It is essential that such problems are tackled at their root and that those who face persecution are effectively protected.

Professor Bielefeldt, in your report you emphasise the primary responsibility of the State to protect against such violations.

We are interested to hear your views on how States can best be held accountable for violations which are committed on the basis of religion or belief.

Could you elaborate on ways in which root causes, such as the practice of using religion to define a homogenous understanding of national identity, or a loss of trust in public institutions, can effectively be addressed so that impunity for such violations is prevented?

Thank you.