



Statement of Ireland

44th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

9 July 2020

Madam President, [*Mr/Madam Vice-President,*]

Ireland aligns with the statement of the EU and thanks the Special Rapporteur for his timely report.

In normal times, Ireland, with a core group of Chile, Japan, Sierra Leone and Tunisia, would have presented a resolution on civil society space to this Session of the Council. Instead, last week we delivered a joint statement on behalf of states and civil society organisations underlining our commitment to highlighting the critical need to protect and promote a safe and enabling environment for civil society.

Ireland shares the concerns expressed by the Special Rapporteur that actions taken in response to the COVID pandemic “*may exacerbate the constraints pressuring an already fragile civic space*”. Measures that limit freedom of peaceful assembly and association which are necessary for public health, must not be used to disrupt the work of civil society.

Furthermore, new concerns have emerged for civic space with the general move to online methods of communication and engagement. If it is impossible or difficult to come together in person, the potential negative effects on civil society of internet shutdowns and digital surveillance are compounded.

Mr Voule, what concrete steps do you recommend states take to create an enabling and safe space for civil society during the pandemic?

Thank you.

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