

Human Rights Council 13th session

General debate Item 3

Statement by Norway

15 March 2010

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Bente Angell-Hansen

Thank you Mr President,

The Human Rights Council has a strong mandate to deal with violations of human rights in all countries. The engagement by the Council should be objective, constructive and focused on improving the situation of human rights on the ground.

During this session, the Human Rights Council addresses several country situations, including Myanmar, DPRK, DRC, Somalia and the Human Rights situation in Occupied Palestinian Territories. Norway will engage actively on all these situations.

We strongly believe that constructive engagement on the part of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms should be met with a willingness to cooperate on the part of States.

This year Iran is a candidate for membership in the Human Rights Council. All countries seeking membership commit to “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights”. We are deeply concerned about the lack of willingness to cooperate with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council demonstrated by Iran.

Norway is also deeply concerned about the ongoing, systemic and serious restrictions of freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of opinion and expression in Iran. Many journalists have been arrested or forced to leave the country. We call on Iran to honour its obligations to allow freedom of speech, association and assembly.

We remain concerned about the working conditions and the vulnerable situation of human rights defenders in Iran, including in particular defenders of women’s rights. We call on the Government of Iran to investigate, prosecute and punish complaints of harassment, intimidation or arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders and to allow the Centre for Human Rights Defenders to reopen.

Norway is also concerned about the situation for religious minorities in Iran. We call on Iran to ensure that all religious minorities, including the Bahá’ís, can enjoy religious freedom.

Iran is one of very few countries in the world who still execute juvenile offenders. This is in conflict with Iran’s obligations under both the CRC and the ICCPR and we call on the Iranian

government to immediately halt the execution of all individuals who allegedly committed crimes before they reached 18 years of age.

Norway urges Iran to honour its commitment to cooperate with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and to facilitate as a matter of priority the visits requested and agreed upon in principle, including the Working Group on enforced and involuntary disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

Mr President,

We would also like to use this opportunity to draw the Councils attention to the situation of human rights in the Sudan.

The respect for fundamental human and political rights of all the Sudanese people is one of the key principles in Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Consistent and intensified efforts are needed in order to ensure that these principles are fully respected towards the end of the interim period. The success of the planned national elections in April 2010 and the 2011 referendum on South Sudan's right to self-determination is conditional on a stable and secure environment, a free press and freedom of speech and association. We call on the Government to assume its responsibilities in this regard.

Thank you