

JOINT STATEMENT
Human Rights Council 35th Session

Concluding statement
23 June 2017

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of States including Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

At the opening of this 35th HRC session the High Commissioner reminded us that Members of this Council, and candidates for future membership, have a particular responsibility to cooperate with the Council and its mechanisms.

We are committed to the success and effectiveness of the Human Rights Council and convinced that the Council has an invaluable role to play in promoting and protecting human rights worldwide.

Resolution 60/251, which set up this Council in March 2006, makes clear that Council members shall “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights” and “fully cooperate with the Council” (GA 60/251, OP9), and that when electing members, States “shall take into account the contribution of candidates to the promotion and protection of human rights and their voluntary pledges and commitments” (GA 60/251, OP8).

In furtherance of these requirements, as members, observers and candidate countries, we commit to strengthening the Council through good practice, and pledge to:

- Strive to ensure **competitive HRC membership elections**, particularly by encouraging more candidates than seats within each regional group
- Engage in **voting based on human rights considerations** consistent with GA resolution 60/251, including by considering the degree to which candidates are cooperating with the Council and its mechanisms.
- Participate actively in candidate pledging events in New York and Geneva.
- Promote **universal participation and diversity** in the Human Rights Council by supporting and increasing the capacity of Small States to strengthen engagement with the Council and its mechanisms and, eventually, to become members. We note with concern that, to date, around 90 States have never held a seat on the HRC – including most

Small Island Developing States.

- When seeking Council membership, make **candidate pledges** in accordance with the framework elaborated by the OHCHR, and publish them in good time.
(www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/Pledges.pdf);
- Apply **objective and human rights-based criteria**, such as those elaborated in previous joint statements delivered at this Council (e.g. by Ireland at HRC 32 and by the Maldives at HRC 20), in determining whether and how the Council should respond to a situation of concern, and take leadership and responsibility in initiating action when such criteria are met;
- Recognise that no State has a perfect human rights record, engage in the work of this Council in a spirit of **self-reflection** with a view to improvement of our own human rights situation, and **address human rights concerns on their merits**;
- **Cooperate** fully, substantively and in good faith **with the OHCHR, the Council and its mechanisms**, including responding in a timely manner to Special Procedures' communications, urgent appeals and country visit requests;
- **Avoid procedural tactics**, such as "no action" motions, to block debate and prevent the Council from considering human rights issues on their merits:
- Work in close cooperation and **consult with civil society** in relation to our candidacies and general engagement with the Council, strive to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society, and engage robustly to **prevent and address acts of intimidation and reprisals**, speaking up to address such incidents when they occur;
- Plan to make progress in the promotion, protection and realisation of human rights at the **national level**, including through **implementation** of recommendations and resolutions of the Council and its mechanisms.

We are convinced that these commitments when properly respected and applied by all members, observers or candidates will help strengthen the Council's effectiveness and credibility.

Thank you