

Human Rights Council

39th Session

Interactive Dialogue with the Assistant Secretary-General on SG report on reprisals

19 September 2018

Statement on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries

Mr. President,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

We are deeply concerned by the increased number of allegations contained in the reprisals reports from the Secretary-General, which documents how acts of intimidation and reprisal against those cooperating with the United Nations continues to be a grave problem.

Intimidation and reprisals affect not only individuals and groups, but are alarming also for the very negative message they send to others who wish to engage with the United Nations freely. It is very disturbing that the UN has documented self-censorship in all regions. We are particularly concerned about reports of acts of reprisals by Council Members and candidates for Council membership who must uphold the highest human rights standards. We call on every State to make it a priority to prevent and put an end to acts of intimidation and reprisals.

Another disturbing trend is the use of national security arguments and counter-terrorism strategies by States as justification for blocking access for civil society to the UN. As the report highlights, protecting human rights is the best way to tackle the root causes of terrorism. National security should never be an excuse to limit participation and engagement with the UN.

With reference to resolution A/36/21, we encourage the HRC Presidency to provide short oral updates on cases of alleged intimidation or reprisal, including actions taken, at the start of the Item 5 general debate of each Human Rights Council session, and to provide States concerned with the opportunity to respond.

- Mr Gilmour, what do you see as the greatest obstacles in combatting reprisals, and how can we best help you from Geneva?