



Statement of Ireland

45th session of the Human Rights Council

The Protection of Indigenous Human Rights Defenders.
23rd September 2020

Madame President,

Ireland aligns with the statement of the EU and thanks the panel for their informative presentations.

Ireland has been a longstanding advocate of the key role played by human rights defenders (HRDs) in advancing the promotion and protection of human rights for all. This role has become ever more vital as we see many States failing in their responsibility to protect these rights. This has been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic where some governments have taken further measures to restrict human rights and civil society space.

As the panel has discussed, it is widely recognised that indigenous rights, along with land and environmental rights, remains one of the most precarious sectors in which HRDs act. Indigenous HRDs are at a disproportionate risk of attack. Last year, an estimated 40% of murdered HRDs belonged to indigenous communities – while indigenous peoples make up only 5% of the world's population.

Ireland remains concerned by reports of increased violence and threats against indigenous HRDs by State and non-State Actors. We condemn unreservedly the use of violence or intimidation against HRDs, and call on all governments to ensure that the perpetrators of such violence and intimidation are brought to justice.

In the spirit of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is critical that the international community reaffirm that '*indigenous individuals are entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized in international law*', including being able to defend their rights. Today's panel is an important opportunity for member states to support the United Nations in their work on this important issue.

It is essential that we recognise the challenges faced by women indigenous human rights defenders, who face additional discrimination due to their intersectional status as women and as indigenous people, and are at heightened risk of attacks and marginalisation within their societies.

How can Ireland and other states work together to ensure that women indigenous rights defenders have equal access to protection from threats of violence and intimidation in the future?

Thank you.

[334 words]