

Every reprisal diminishes our ability to deliver for the people we serve

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to deliver this cross-regional statement on behalf of United Kingdom and 74 other countries: The former Commission on Human Rights adopted its first resolution condemning reprisals against those who cooperate with the UN in 1990. Sadly, these acts of intimidation continue to this day.

Civil society and human rights defenders are crucial in supporting our work at the UN. They enrich our decision-making and ensure that the impact of our decisions at the UN matter.

We condemn any act of intimidation and reprisal, whether online or offline, against individuals and groups who cooperate, seek to cooperate, or have cooperated with the UN.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report on this issue. We share his concerns on:

- The growing number and patterns of reprisals globally;
- The disproportionate impact on certain groups, including women human rights defenders and peacebuilders; and
- The continued attacks on journalists and media workers.

We urge States to take action. Key steps include prevention measures, awareness-raising, and ensuring accountability through robust investigations. States should inform all relevant actors, including the Secretary-General and the Human Rights Council, of all such incidents, whether perpetrated by State or non-State actors. We welcome the steps taken by States who have responded to acts of reprisals against persons and groups in their countries. We also welcome the work of Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ilze Brands Kehris, who is leading UN efforts on this issue. We believe that the ASG's mandate ensures a more systematised response to reprisals, and will help put an end to impunity. We urge all Member States to cooperate with Ms Kehris in fulfilling her mandate.

Madame Chair,

While States carry a duty to prevent and address reprisals, the UN itself must also prevent and respond to intimidation and reprisals, and ensure accountability when these acts occur. We urge all UN entities to strengthen their response to these incidents by taking proactive steps, including

submitting incidents of reprisals for the SG's annual report. We also welcome more frequent reporting on reprisals, including here in New York, to increase awareness and accountability.

Madame Chair,

In this time, when we all share a common threat from Covid-19, we need the perspective, support and critical challenge that civil society organisations and human rights defenders bring. We all need to ensure they feel safe, including in virtual meetings. When they cooperate with us, we are strengthened. And every reprisal diminishes our ability to deliver for the people we serve.