**HRC 43**

**General Debate Item 5 - 11 March 2020**

**Intervention by the Netherlands on behalf of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (Benelux)**

**Speaking time: 2 min 30**

Thank you, Madam President.

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the three countries of the Benelux, Belgium, Luxembourg and my own country, the Netherlands.

We condemn all forms of intimidation and reprisals against civil society actors who engage with the representatives and mechanisms of the United Nations in the field of human rights.

Madam President,

We welcome your pledge at the opening of this session to follow up on all allegations of reprisals against individuals who have engaged with the UN human rights system. We commend your strong call on all states to prevent such acts.

We are concerned about the following cases of intimidation and reprisals:

* Ms Samar Badawi and Ms Louhain Al-Hathlour, women human rights defenders from Saudi Arabia who engaged with the UPR and CEDAW.
* Mr Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaeim, Ms Ebtesam and Mr Nabeel Rajab from Bahrein for their collaboration with the Treaty Bodies and the Human Rights Council.
* Ms Huda Al-Sarari, a human rights defender and lawyer from Yemen, who faced reprisals because of her cooperation with international human rights mechanisms.
* Mr Armel Niyongere, Mr Dieudonné Bashirahishize, Mr Vital Nshimirimana, and Mr Lambert Nigarura, human rights lawyers from Burundi.
* Medical personnel, human rights defenders and members of students’ movements in Venezuela who cooperated with OHCHR during its first visit to the country in March 2019.
* Ms Chen Jianfang, a woman human rights defender from China who disappeared in March 2019 after having written a tribute marking the fifth anniversary of the death in custody of her colleague, human rights activist Cao Shunli.

We also note with concern that reprisals are a trend that we see in ALL regions of the world.

Madam President,

We encourage you and the Bureau to make public statements on serious and unresolved cases of reprisals and to address such cases systematically. It is crucial that all specific cases of reprisals receive public attention. We have submitted some concrete proposals in writing and we would reiterate our invitation to the Bureau to enter into a dialogue on those proposals.

Thank you.