

**Joint Statement on Reprisals by BENELUX countries**

[UPLOAD VERSION]

Madam President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the countries of the Benelux: Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. We confirm our principled position as expressed in previous statements and condemn all forms of intimidation and reprisals against civil society actors who engage with UN Human Rights mechanisms. The effective functioning of the UN Human Rights system relies largely on the meaningful engagement with civil society actors.

We therefore call upon all States, to take all necessary measures to end, prevent, investigate and ensure accountability for acts of intimidation or reprisal, and report back to the Council on action taken, for example during relevant debates and interactive-dialogues.

We praise the efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner in addressing reprisals, as well as the important work of Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Brands Kehris. We stress the importance of clear UN protocols on how to respond to reprisals. We urge that sufficient resources should be made available within OHCHR to further improve reporting, follow-up, coordination and analysis around reprisals.

Finally, more action is needed to address situations in which civil society space is systemically repressed and hardly any documentation of reprisals cases surfaces. This can be done through improved data collection, analysis, documentation and increased reporting. OHCHR country visits can be an important tool in gathering this documentation, but can also be a cause for reprisals. We urge the UN to gather information on reprisal cases during country visits and to take preliminary measures to prevent reprisals afterwards.

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We appreciate the research of the International Service for Human Rights and thank them for their analyses and recommendations on this topic. Thank you.