

UNITED KINGDOM

First Meeting of the Open-ended IGWG on the Review and Functioning of the Human Rights Council (October 27, 2010)

UK Statement on Special Procedures

Thank Mr. President

The UK fully supports the earlier EU statement and proposals delivered by Belgium. The UK strongly supports the work of Special Procedures and regards them as an indispensable mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights. We commend the accomplishments of both thematic and country mandates since the Commission on Human Rights established the first mechanism in 1967, to investigate torture and ill treatment of detainees in South Africa.

The Special Procedures have been responsible for a range of important achievements:

Both country specific and thematic mandates have made significant contributions to human rights and national transition processes including by highlighting situations of concern and providing assistance in many countries from all regions.

A range of thematic mandates have been responsible for monitoring the implementation of human rights law as well as developing additional normative instruments for use by Governments, national bodies, and civil society.

And, in more recent years, the establishment of a system of urgent appeals aimed at the protection of victims and prevention of human rights violations has been a welcome development.

It is essential that we use the review process to build on these and other achievements while addressing the shortcomings in the current system. It is key for the Council to have the best possible experts at its disposal to serve as Special Procedures and that the appointments process must be guided by this objective. We therefore welcome and support the proposals by Mexico and others to develop improved criteria for inclusion of individuals in the roster of Special Procedure mandate holders.

We have listened carefully to suggestions that there should be additional oversight of the Special Procedures. We firmly reject these ideas which we believe are motivated, on the part of some, by a desire to undermine the independence and effectiveness of the Special Procedures system. We believe that the current mechanisms we have for ensuring compliance with the code of conduct through the Human Rights Council Presidential Statement 8/2 and through the Special Procedures coordination committee has proved more than sufficient to meet concerns raised by states.

Regrettably, one of the major failings of the current system is that there continues to be far too little cooperation with the system of Special Procedures. We therefore propose that greater emphasis should be put on states' record of cooperation with the Special Procedures system during meetings of the Human Rights Council. This should also be taken into account when states are standing for human rights Council membership,

We propose that it should be obligatory for Council members to cooperate fully with all Council mechanisms throughout their time on the Council by agreeing to requests for country visits and responding to their communications.

We are alarmed by the continuing attacks on human rights defenders and other individuals which occur as a direct consequence of their cooperation with Special Procedures , particularly following country visits. We propose that the Council enhances its level of attention to the problems of reprisals against those individuals who cooperate with the mechanisms of the UN system, including the Special Procedures.

Mr President we believe that the Special Procedures system has the potential to play a much more effective early warning function in seeking to prevent large scale human rights violations. For this to occur, there needs to be much more systematic consideration of the conclusion and recommendations of Special Procedures.

In this context we support the proposals made to enhance the level of dialogue with individual mandate holders through reforming the way in which interactive dialogues operate at the Council. We agree that individual discussion would be of greater benefit than the current clustered dialogue arrangement. We also propose dedicated discussion of follow up to previous reports and country visits carried out by Special Procedures.

We look forward to engaging on all of those proposals which seek to make constructive improvements to the Special Procedures and which will serve to enhance to the level of human rights promotion and protection which they provide.

Thank you Mr President