

Appeal of June 13th 2016

To put Human Rights at the Heart of Conflict Prevention

1. As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Human Rights Council, Switzerland together with Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Haïti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay welcome the significant achievements of the Council in promoting and protecting human rights all over the world and jointly call for the strengthening of human rights as an invaluable tool for conflict prevention.

2. We reaffirm the purposes and principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and we recall the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other relevant international human rights instruments. Furthermore, we reaffirm that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis.

3. Since its creation, the Human Rights Council has been playing a decisive role in our common endeavor to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to the Human Rights Council and we pledge to further support the Council in the fulfillment of its mandate.

4. When establishing the Human Rights Council, Member States underlined that peace and security, development and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. A lot has been achieved in the past ten years to strengthen the United Nations' human rights pillar. The Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have made important contributions in this regard. Yet, more could be done to further implement the mainstreaming mandate of the Human Rights Council. We need to strengthen the human rights pillar as well as enhance its linkages with the peace and security and development pillars.

5. In particular, we believe that the Human Rights Council can and should play a more prominent role in conflict prevention. Human rights violations are at the same time cause and consequence of armed conflicts. While the most egregious human rights violations and abuses often happen in situations of armed conflict, when the civilian population, including women and children, are particularly vulnerable to

abuse, they are also an indicator of potential instability or of the escalation of a conflict. While globalisation and rapidly increasing interconnectivity increase the risk of overspill of initial internal conflicts, the promotion and protection of human rights is becoming a key to conflict prevention.

The Human Rights Council thus has a key role to play at every stage of the prevention continuum: building respect for human rights to sustain peace, supporting peaceful conflict resolution; monitoring human rights violations and abuses as early warning to intensify prevention; mitigation during an ongoing armed conflict; followed in the post-conflict phase by accountability mechanisms, capacity building as well as monitoring to sustain peace.

6. We hence take the 10 year anniversary of the Human Rights Council as an occasion to commit to intensifying the nexus between the United Nations' three pillars and to put human rights at the heart of conflict prevention. We welcome the on-going efforts of the United Nations Secretariat to mainstream the promotion and protection of human rights in all United Nations activities with a view to preventing situations of armed conflict. We appreciate the persistent efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to highlight situations of serious human rights violations and abuses and to provide support to States in protecting, respecting and fulfilling human rights. We also believe that Member States should make full use of the interlinkages and mutually reinforcing nature among the three pillars in order to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of the United Nations' conflict prevention and peace sustaining activities.

7. We are convinced that the Human Rights Council can play a more important role in conflict prevention and that significant progress can be achieved within the current institutional setting and with the instruments currently available to us. We therefore call on Member States to foster and enhance communication and exchanges between the Human Rights Council and the rest of the United Nations system, in particular the Security Council, and their respective bodies, mechanisms and members, in order to ensure that the United Nations human rights work is given optimal consideration in United Nations' conflict prevention activities.

In particular:

- We call on Members of the Human Rights Council to ask the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council decisions and reports of the Human Rights Council relevant to conflict prevention; and to foster relevant exchanges between the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council and the bodies of the Security Council with a view to enhancing conflict prevention;
- We invite Members of the Security Council to request regular briefings by the High Commissioner for Human Rights; to supplement its information base for informed decisions with reports of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including commissions of inquiry, in order to enhance its action in conflict prevention; and to strengthen interaction between the subsidiary

bodies of the Security Council and the relevant mechanisms of the Human Rights Council;

- We call on United Nations Member States to systematically integrate the human rights dimension in their respective conflict prevention activities; and to increase their support to OHCHR in order for OHCHR to be able to fulfill its mandate, in particular by gathering first-hand information from its field presences and by analyzing available information at headquarters.

8. By joining this appeal we commit to use actively our membership in all relevant bodies of the United Nations to put human rights at the heart of conflict prevention and make conflict prevention a reality.