

**Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.**

**10 March 2014**

**Ireland Statement**

Thank you Mr President.

Ireland would like to thank the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment for his report on human rights obligations relating to the environment.

While recognition of the links between human rights and the environment has increased in recent years, this mapping report is a particularly valuable contribution to understanding the application of human rights obligations relating to the environment, both in terms of environmental protection and environmental harm. These obligations are also both procedural and substantive. The Council has already recognised in resolution 16/11 that “environmental damage is felt most acutely by those segments of the population already in vulnerable situations”. We therefore welcome the focus in the report on specific groups who may be particularly vulnerable to environmental harm and may need additional protection as a result, particularly children and the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. We also welcome the increased focus on the impact of climate change on the right to a healthy environment.

Ireland also notes the recent Joint Letter of the Mandate Holders of the Human Rights Council to the Members of the Open Working Group on the SDGs, which highlights the importance of facilitating public participation in environmental decision making, including by protecting the rights to freedom of expression and association, so as to ensure people are able to participate freely in the protection of their environment. The particular importance of environmental human rights defenders in safeguarding those rights cannot be undervalued and we look forward to further work on this area.

States’ obligations to protect human rights in the face of environmental harm also include obligations to protect against abuses by private actors. We would like to ask the Independent

Expert how States might improve protection against non-State abuses including effective measures of enforcement.