



Statement of Ireland

44th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 2: Interactive Dialogue on the comprehensive report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in the Philippines

30 June 2020

Madam President, [*Mr/Madam Vice-President,*]

Ireland aligns with the statement of the European Union.

Ireland thanks the High Commissioner for her detailed report on the situation of human rights in the Philippines and for the constructive recommendations set out therein.

Ireland recognises the significant work undertaken by the Government in recent years in securing and vindicating economic and social rights for its people.

However, we are concerned by the findings of the High Commissioner, particularly the imposition of restrictions on freedom of expression and the media, highlighted by the prosecution of journalists Maria Ressa and Reynaldo Santos and by elements of the draft anti-terrorism law. Freedom of opinion and expression, online and offline, are essential cornerstones of democracy.

We urge the Government to take swift action to ensure that the media and civil society, including human rights defenders, can freely carry out their work without interference.

Ireland, along with the EU, remains committed to supporting the Government in strengthening and reforming its justice sector and bolstering the rule of law, including through the GOJUST Programme. We encourage the Government to cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner and relevant special mandate holders to address the challenges identified in the report.

Madam High Commissioner, your report also focuses on the serious human rights violations that have taken place as a result of the ongoing campaign against illegal drugs. How would you advise the international community to advocate for the merits and effectiveness of a human rights based approach given the deeply polarised views we have seen?

Thank you.