



Mr President,

I make this statement on behalf of a group of countries – the full list of which and the full version of this statement will be published on the extranet.

We are deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Cambodia, which has further deteriorated since the last Human Rights Council session. We do not consider the pre-election environment to be conducive to holding free, fair and genuine national elections. An electoral process from which the main democratic opposition party has been arbitrarily excluded cannot be considered genuine or guarantee the free expression of the will of the voters. Cambodia is on a path that threatens to reverse 26 years of democratic development and progress after the 1991 Paris Peace Accords.

In this regard we note additional concerning developments since the last joint-statement:

- Further restrictions on freedom of expression both online and offline: The adoption of a new *lèse majesté* clause in the Criminal Code and subsequent prosecutions, and amendments to the Cambodian Constitution that further restrict the rights to freedom of expression and association
- The continued intimidation of journalists and media organisations who feel unable to report freely on all topics, leaving individuals in Cambodia with limited independent press coverage. We note the sale of the Phnom Penh Post in May.
- Continued use of judicial proceedings to target dissent and political opposition, and an increase in flight from the country by members of civil society and politicians out of fear of arbitrary arrest, physical harassment and intimidation

The general election scheduled for 29 July cannot be regarded as genuinely free and fair and thus legitimate without allowing the participation of the main opposition party. The registration of a number of small political parties does not make up for the fact that the CNRP has been dissolved by the Supreme Court.

We note the ongoing concerns expressed by several Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, including: the 15 June joint-statement by three Special Procedures; and the recent opinion expressing the views of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, that the deprivation of liberty of Kem Sokha is arbitrary as a matter of international human rights law.

We call on the Cambodian government to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Kem Sokha and all political prisoners
- Reinstate the CNRP

- Repeal amendments to the Constitution and other laws that are inconsistent with Cambodia's human rights obligations
- Stop harassing members of the political opposition, journalists and civil society.
- Refrain from intervening in court cases and ensure the full independence of the judiciary branch.
- Create an enabling environment for all forms of media

We encourage OHCHR to monitor the situation before, during and after the elections and report back to this Council at its next session. We will look to further consideration by the Human Rights Council if the human rights situation does not improve.

Thank you Mr President.