

Human Rights Council – 42nd Session

Interactive Dialogue with the Assistant Secretary-General on Reprisals

18 September 2019

Australian Statement

Australia welcomes the Secretary-General's Report and thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his presentation. We are disturbed by reports of reprisals against victims, human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations who cooperate with the UN, perpetrated by both State and non-State actors. Too often, reprisals are carried out by members of the HRC - who should be upholding the highest standards of human rights and fully cooperating with the mechanisms of the HRC - calling into disrespect this Council and its work.

We are concerned by reports that NGO applications for consultative status with ECOSOC are being arbitrarily deferred based on political motivations of members of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. Australia joins in calling on all members of the Committee to apply the criteria for assessing organizations in a fair and transparent manner.

Australia is concerned about reports of widespread intimidation and reprisals against indigenous peoples and we welcome the Assistant Secretary-General's call for more regular reporting, online documentation of incidents and analysis of how national laws and policies affect the engagement of indigenous peoples with the UN.

We are also concerned about continuing reports that women and LGBTI persons are exposed to gender- or sexual orientation-specific barriers, threats and violence in their engagement with the UN. This includes threats of rape, online smear campaigns, sexual assault in detention, and humiliating and degrading treatment. In this regard, we welcome OHCHR's efforts to examine, investigate and document intimidation and reprisals in a gender-responsive manner.

Australia thanks the Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General and OHCHR for their important work to investigate, address and prevent intimidation and reprisals against those seeking to cooperate with the UN, its representative and mechanisms in the field of human rights.