

Human Rights Council – 43rd Session

Draft statement: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

4 March 2018

Australia welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur and thanks him for his presentation and his work over the past six years.

Australia has a long history of support for human rights defenders. We acknowledge the essential role they play in bringing the most serious of violations to the attention of the international community, often at great personal risk.

Australia recognises the essential contribution of these defenders to the work of the Council, its mechanisms and treaty bodies.

We also acknowledge that, sadly, it is for these reasons some seek to silence their voices.

Australia is gravely concerned by the ongoing escalation of reprisals against defenders around the globe, including reports of killings, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention, attacks, sexual violence, and intimidation of defenders. We condemn these persecutions in all situations and call on States to commit to ending impunity for those that seek to stifle the voices of defenders.

We commend the work of organisations dedicated to protecting defenders under threat, such as the Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund, which Australia supports.

Given the often complex and chaotic nature of conflict and post conflict settings, Australia would be interested in hearing from the Special Rapporteur about how building networks of solidarity can better support the safety of defenders working on the ground.

214 words.