

## Human Rights Council – 37th Session

### High level panel discussion on the seventieth anniversary of the UDHR and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the VDPA **28 February 2018**

#### Mountains Group Joint Statement

I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of the MOUNTAINS\* group of countries.

The Mountains group of countries wholeheartedly reaffirm our commitment to stand up for the human rights principles enshrined in the VDPA and UDHR.

While the world has made important progress, we must not let our commitment drift, nor the consensus these instruments represent be diluted.

Human rights are universal, indivisible and interrelated. But we have some way to go before they are fully realised. Discrimination and exclusion remain a reality for many people. For example, we continue to see acts of discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Women's rights over their own bodies are questioned. Persons with disabilities continue to face grave disadvantages.

Furthermore, we must recognise and respect the interdependent and mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights, democracy and development, to facilitate the implementation of both our human rights obligations and sustainable development commitments.

We already have the tools to address these challenges. The Human Rights Council – as guardian of rights and freedoms across the globe – is more important than ever. We must ensure it is enabled to be an effective and responsive protector of the principles contained in the UDHR and VDPA.

Civil society organisations, human rights defenders and National Human Rights Institutions play an integral role by giving a voice to the lived experience of rights holders, and supporting states to fulfil their obligations. They also must be protected – lest we fail to meet the goals we have set ourselves in the UDHR and VDPA.

In an effort to achieve the objectives within of these two documents, we ask the panellists how more effective cooperation and coordination can be created between existing mechanisms in Geneva such as the HRC, and the work of the UN that takes place in New York?

\*Australia, Canada, Lichtenstein, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland.

304 Words