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UNGA Third Committee Interactive Dialogue Special Rapporteur Human Rights Defenders

Intervention for 15 October 2019

- Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur for his report and his ongoing work to create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders.
- We welcome the Special Rapporteur's focus on the challenge of addressing impunity for human rights violations against human rights defenders. We thank him for his analysis of how the fight against impunity can be impacted by obstacles such as institutional weakness, corruption, lack of an independent judiciary, or lack of political will.
- We agree that States must take a zero tolerance approach to attacks on human rights defenders but also create a safe environment that is conducive to human rights defence efforts.
- We thank the Special Rapporteur for his recommendations on how to combat impunity effectively, and for his efforts to provide examples of appropriate regulatory frameworks and "essential guidelines" for states to consider.
- We appreciated the Special Rapporteur's analysis of how human rights violations against human rights defenders are attributable to both State and non-State actors, and that it is common for digital media to be used as part of these attacks, for example to violate their rights to privacy of through threats of sexual violence.

- We also note with concern reports that women human rights defenders and persons who defend LGBTI rights encounter additional obstacles, including linked to gender discrimination, and that lack of sex disaggregated data can mask this.
- Australia is committed to ensuring all individuals – including human rights defenders – enjoy the same human rights protections online and offline and are able to defend human rights in safe environments which recognise diversity.
- What are the Special Rapporteur's views on best practices for addressing digital attacks against human rights defenders and holding perpetrators to account?

280 words