

Joint NGO End-of-Session Statement

- delivered by Philippe Dam on behalf of Human Rights Watch, International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), Article 19, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia), Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Civicus, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP), Human Rights Law Centre, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), World Organisation Against Torture

As we close this session, civil society shares a sense of disappointment about the Council's overall failure to effectively fulfil its mandate to address situations of human rights violations, and hold States to account for these violations.

In particular, we regret the continued unwillingness of the Council and its member States to address widespread human rights violations perpetrated by its member States, and the failure of the same States to fully cooperate with the Council or adhere to basic membership standards.

We're encouraged by continuing efforts to keep the spotlight on accountability in Sri Lanka and with diligent implementation yielding concrete results, this could become a good example of what can be achieved at the Council through persistence, leadership and courage on the part of civil society and, in some cases, States. We also welcome steps to put Burundi on this Council's agenda, presenting an opportunity and responsibility to prevent further deterioration in the country.

Conversely, we are disappointed by the lack of transparency in negotiations of the resolution on Sudan, which affects the capacity of human rights defenders to fully participate and contribute to the debate. We deplore the failure to set up the much-needed reporting mechanism on the forgotten conflicts in Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur.

We are also dismayed at the failure to hold all parties to the conflict in Yemen to account for widespread serious violations. We echo the call of some States for further urgent action on accountability in Yemen should the situation fail to improve. The world will be watching.

This resolution also illustrates a growing tendency of giving a clearly outsized role to those States responsible for human rights violations in holding the pen on resolutions. They often do so not with the intention of actually addressing the situation, but with the aim of shielding their own acts and omissions from international scrutiny. Sadly, they are often supported by their allies for the sake of political expediency. This practice undermines the mandate of the Human Rights Council.

We welcome the focus of the technical cooperation panel next March on the rights of migrants, while emphasising that more needs to be done to ensure that States meet their international obligations to respect the human rights of migrants and refugees.

In relation to the participation of civil society, Mr President, we welcome the explicit affirmation by more than 60 States of the Council's legal duty to address intimidation and reprisals, and protect those cooperating with the Council. In that regard, we also welcome the role that your bureau and you personally have played, and urge this practice be continued by your successors.

In closing, Mr. President, since this is this your last official session, we thank you personally for your efforts throughout your Presidency at making the Council a safer place for human rights defenders, and seeking to enhance the impact of its work on the lives of people around the world.