



Item 2 General Debate

March 23, 2016

Mr. President,

Canada supports the work of the office of the Secretary General, the OHCHR, and the High Commissioner in preparing the reports that provide valuable information for the deliberations of these sessions. These reports highlight areas of progress and concern and in doing so provide an independent record which can facilitate dialogue and yield tangible results.

There are several issues raised in these reports that Canada wishes to highlight.

Canada is concerned about the limits on civil society space and attempts to silence dissent by some Governments by enacting restrictive legislation and denying individuals the guarantees of due process and fair trial.

A number of reports emphasize the important work of human rights lawyers in building vibrant and rights-respecting societies. We urge States to foster an environment where human rights lawyers are able to carry out their professional responsibilities.

Reports of harassment and arrests based on sexual orientation and gender identity are widespread and run contrary to States' commitments to upholding universal human rights. We call on states to ensure legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, or gender identity, and to prosecute incitement to violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

Among the concerns, there are some bright spots that we wish to note, including: we applaud those States that are working with the Council and its resources to establish credible mechanisms for transitional justice, and to strengthen accountability and the rule of law. Impunity for those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights is another issue of grave concern for Canada.

Finally, we note States where fair and transparent elections have recently brought in new governments, and congratulate them on peaceful transitions of power.