

26th Session of the Human Rights Council

Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the right to promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, and Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai

10th June 2014

Statement by the Czech Republic

Thank you Mr. President. We support the statement delivered by the European Union.

We welcome both Special Rapporteurs and would like to share the following remarks. Turning first to the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression:

The Czech Republic wishes to thank you for continuous work and your latest report. We welcome its focus on the enjoyment of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the electoral context.

The Czech Republic attaches great importance to the effective participation of all segments of society in public and political life of their country. Election processes are clearly at the core of it, and space for open discussion together with access to pluralistic information are essential conditions for this participation to be meaningful.

The Czech legal system guarantees freedom of opinion and expression and pays special attention to the necessity of objectivity, accuracy and balance of information provided by media in general, while setting even higher standards for public media, and especially so in the in the run-up to, during and after the elections.

In your research, you came across situations in which media's role of shaping public opinion was hindered by undue political pressures. What specific safeguards would you recommend to counter these attempts?

Mr. Maina Kiai,

The Czech Republic would like to thank you for your latest report as well as your recommendations. We welcome your focus on discrimination of groups most at risk which include i. a. persons with disabilities; youth; women; LGBTI people; members of minority groups. Also those who actively lobby and advocate for the rights of groups most at risk, such as human rights defenders, deserve proper attention.

We concur with your statement that the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are due to everyone without distinction. Discrimination on prohibited grounds has to be eliminated, both in law and in practice, whether perpetrated by the State or by non-State actors often through stereotypes and assumptions that keep the concerned groups at the margins of society.

With concern, we learnt about the countless examples of violation and abuse of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association affecting groups most at risk and we thank you for

presenting to us illustrative patterns. Pointing to those restrictions that are drafted to appear neutral but in practice are applied only against certain groups demonstrates the complexity of the issue.

Mr. Kiai, what further steps can be taken to improve the ability of those most at risk to exercise their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association? What positive measures Governments should take?

We thank you and wish you both all the best in your further work.