

## Statement at Intersessional meeting on human rights and the 2030 Agenda

3 December 2019

Thank you Mr. President.

Human rights defenders are indispensable to sustainable and inclusive development, as well as addressing poverty and inequality.

The Human Rights Council [recognized](#) their important role in supporting States to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the pledge that no one will be left behind and to reach the furthest behind first.

The Council stressed that defenders must be ensured a safe and enabling environment to undertake their work free from hindrance and insecurity.

This is absolutely central for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Attacks and restrictions against defenders and civic space, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, run contrary to this goal.

ISHR remains highly concerned that paradoxically, some of the States who champion the right to development are also States that systematically restrict, repress and attack economic, social and cultural rights defenders.

States who continue to restrict civic space are moving in the wrong direction.

In the political declaration of the high-level political forum, world leaders affirmed their commitment to “build peaceful, just and inclusive societies and to respect, protect and fulfil human rights”.

The SDGs are underpinned by legally binding human rights norms and standards.

Their implementation requires a human-rights based approach and an inclusive and participatory process that ensures equality, non-discrimination and the full and effective participation of the population.

Defenders and independent civil society engage with their communities, governments, and non-State actors to push for the realization of all human rights, which includes the SDGs.

ISHR calls on governments to take immediate steps to empower defenders and include them in the processes for following-up and monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs.

We call on all UN agencies, including but not limited to UNDP, to treat the Declaration on human rights defenders as of much of a ‘guiding star’ for their work as the SDGs themselves.

We call on the UN Secretary-General to lead the development and ensure the accountable implementation of a system-wide policy on the promotion and protection of HRDs, such as that already adopted by UN Environment, as a vital component of contributing to implementation of the SDGs.