



Statement by
**the Republic of Slovenia on behalf of the Quadrilateral Group
(Austria, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland)**
at the

39th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary General Andrew Gilmour

Geneva, 19 September 2018

Thank you, Mr President.

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Slovenia.

Mr Gilmour, we would like to thank you for your report and your work. Let me underline our full support to your mandate.

As the High Commissioner pointed out during her first address to the Council, human rights express the core purpose of the United Nations. This purpose can only be achieved through international cooperation – between international and regional organizations, states, civil society, private companies, academia and human rights defenders. This is not a new purpose, as it is the essence of the first article of the UN Charter and numerous other documents, including the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

What is new, however, is the growing number and methods of reprisals against individuals and organizations cooperating with the UN on human rights, which is documented by the SG's annual report. This trend is alarming and in this respect we underline the primary responsibility of States to abstain from, prevent, address and investigate reprisals. We are gravely concerned about the numerous cases outlined in the report, including reprisals against civil society organizations and their representatives, journalists, NHRIs, interpreters, legal representatives and other individuals and their families.

We would like to use this opportunity to express our appreciation for the work and courage of all these individuals. Their work is indispensable for understanding complex situations around the world and for achieving progress on human rights field. Threats and attacks against them are therefore also an attack on the UN and human rights system as such. Last but not least we would like to thank also the President of HRC who has been vocally advocating for this issue during his tenure.

Mr Gilmour, also in relation to the High Commissioner's report on civil society from June, how do you think the UN could strengthen the existing accountability practices and mechanisms?

Thank you.