

Item 2 - Joint statement

Mr. President,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of 27 countries composed of Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Three years have passed since Egyptians from all walks of life rose against a repressive government calling for freedom, human dignity, social justice and a better economy. Like many we have been following the developments ever since. The outcome is not only important to the Egyptian people but also to the region and the international community.

We share the High Commissioner's concern about the escalating violence and her call on all sides to renounce the use of violence. Further, we strongly condemn the reprehensible terrorist attacks in Sinai and elsewhere.

We express concern about the restrictions on the rights to peaceful assembly, expression and association, and about the disproportionate use of lethal force by security forces against demonstrators which resulted in large numbers of deaths and injuries. Security forces have a duty to respect the right to peaceful assembly and should operate in line with the State's international human rights obligations and commitments relevant to the use of force, even when faced with persistent security challenges.

There is a need for accountability. We therefore welcome the creation of a national Fact Finding Commission as an important step. We echo the High Commissioner's call to carry out prompt, independent and impartial investigations into the killings of protesters and security forces during violent events since 30 June 2013, to make the findings public and to bring to justice those responsible in accordance with Egypt's international human rights obligations and commitments. We would welcome if the Egyptian authorities were also to make public the results of the two previous national fact-finding commissions (created in 2011 and 2012).

Human rights defenders and civil society as a whole have an important and legitimate role in the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Also, we believe that it is impossible to create an informed, active and engaged

society, which is essential for transparency and democratic participation, without respect for media freedom and for the work undertaken by journalists. We urge the Egyptian government to end ongoing harassment and threats against those who express dissent and release those arrested for exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association.

We take positive note of the new Constitution, which enshrines human rights and fundamental freedoms. Existing and future legislation should be in line with international obligations and commitments and implemented in a way that ensures full civilian control over all branches of government. The Egyptian authorities should ensure that civilians are tried in civilian courts at all times and defendants' right to due process, including the right to a fair and timely trial.

The Egyptian authorities must ensure an environment conducive to inclusive, transparent and credible elections, open to international observation and monitoring. A prosperous and stable Egypt can only be secured based on an inclusive political dialogue and a democratic solution. This encompasses functioning democratic institutions, respectful of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that protect all individuals, including persons belonging to minorities and women. It is essential that the rights to peaceful assembly, expression, association, freedom of religion, the right to be free from torture as well as the right of fair trial are fully respected without discrimination.

We believe that the High Commissioner's Office can be of assistance to the Egyptian authorities. We further encourage Egypt to continue to avail itself of advice and cooperation from long-term and short term missions of the Office of the High Commissioner and Special Procedures. To the High Commissioner, we would like to ask whether we can look forward to the opening of the regional office in Cairo in the near future.

Thank you for your attention.