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42nd session of the Human Rights Council
Interactive Dialogue with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head of
the OHCHR in New York, Andrew Gilmour
19 September 2019

Intervention by H.E. Ambassador Peter Matt
Permanent Mission of the Principality of Liechtenstein on behalf of the Quadrilateral Group

(Austria, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland)

Thank you, Mr President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Slovenia, Switzerland and my own country, Liechtenstein.

We would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Gilmour for his report and his work in recent years and express our continued support for this mandate.

An open civic space is the bedrock of the advancement of human rights and accountability for human rights violations. The contribution and information provided by individuals and groups seeking to cooperate or having cooperated with the United Nations, including civil society organizations and their representatives, journalists, national human rights institutions, interpreters, legal representatives and other individuals, is a central pillar of the work we do here at the Human Rights Council. They are often the only ones giving a strong voice to victims and survivors of human rights violations.

We therefore strongly condemn any threats, attacks and reprisals, both online and offline, against these individuals and groups as well as against their families, conducted by both, state and non-state actors. We are particularly concerned about reprisals against individuals and groups by Member States of the Human Rights Council, since Member States should uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.

We express concerns that reported reprisals amount to violations of the right of the victim to life, liberty and security of person, and violations of obligations under international law prohibiting torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

We are concerned about reports that women, LGBTI persons and those advocating for their rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights seem to be particularly targeted and exposed to gender-specific threats and violence. Furthermore, we are worried about the continued trend in the use of national security arguments and counter-terrorism strategies by States as justification for blocking access to the United Nations.

Our group rejects intimidation and reprisals and welcomes pledges by other States to do the same and combat impunity. We are grateful for the Assistant Secretary-General and the President of the Human Rights Council to be very outspoken on this issue.

We thank you.