

Item 4 Situations that require the Council's attention

Statement by the Netherlands

Mr President,

The concerns raised by Sweden on behalf of the European Union as a whole, are wholeheartedly shared by The Netherlands. The Netherlands would like to make a few additional remarks on the human rights situation in Iran, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

The Netherlands continues to be concerned about the human rights situation in Iran. The Netherlands is worried about the excessive post-election violence, the high number of arbitrary arrests, mass trials and detentions of those individuals who merely exercised their rights peacefully in the aftermath of the elections of June 12. The Netherlands particularly calls on Iran to end the harassment, intimidation and persecution of political opponents, human rights defenders, academics and journalists. The Netherlands calls on Iran to release all persons imprisoned arbitrarily or on the basis of their political views, in particular Kian Tajbakhsh, Bijan Khajepour and Mohammed Ali Dadkhah. The Netherlands also expresses its concern about reports of human rights abuses in prisons in the aftermath of the elections, and calls on Iran to follow up on its intention to shut down the Kahrizak detention centre and close it as soon as possible. The Netherlands is concerned about the large-scale use of the death penalty in Iran and calls on the Iranian authorities to abolish this penalty. We also wish to underline our concern about the continued human rights violations of religious minorities in Iran, in particular the Baha'is, and the judicial proceedings against seven of their leaders. The Netherlands calls on Iran to comply with its

international commitments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and respect the right of religious minorities to practice their faith.

The Netherlands remains concerned that the *Law on Personal Affairs of the Followers of Shia Jurisprudence in Afghanistan*, was not amended in such a way that it complies with international human rights obligations and conventions, or the Afghan constitution. While some aspects of the procedure to process such a law still remain unclear, the Netherlands would welcome an update on the status of this law from the Government of Afghanistan.

The Netherlands continues to call on the Government of Sri Lanka for an independent and credible investigation into alleged violations of humanitarian and human rights law. The Netherlands is increasingly concerned about freedom of expression and freedom of press after the recent verdict of 20 years imprisonment of the journalist Mr J.S.

Tissainayagam. Mr Tissainayagam's situation in prison is worrisome and the Netherlands calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to continue to allow access to the prison, making it possible to visit Mr Tissainayagam on a regular basis.

Finally, the Netherlands remains concerned about the human rights violations in Zimbabwe, and stresses the urgency for the implementation of legal reform. Regarding the legal reform we specifically ask attention for the rights of women. Regarding the freedom of the press we call upon the authorities to accelerate the creation of the Media Information Committee.

Thank you, Mr President