

HRC 37 – General Debate Item 5

Statement by Portugal on behalf of the Group of Friends of national implementation, reporting and follow-up

Mr. President,

I am speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends on national implementation, reporting and follow-up (Angola, Australia, Bahamas, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Fiji, Georgia, Haiti, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Seychelles, Slovenia, Sweden, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia and Uruguay).

Mr. President,

There is no better way to mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights than to reaffirm our commitment to the domestic realization of the universal norms set down in that historic document. In the intervening 70 years, we have made enormous progress in agreeing and ratifying a raft of international instruments on human rights. We have also established international mechanisms to guide States in the implementation of, and hold them accountable against, the obligations set down in those treaties and we have also established the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council. Consideration and implementation of the recommendations provided by those mechanisms must not lag behind.

We should therefore seize this moment to reaffirm our commitment to transforming international norms into effective national and local reality. As the Secretary-General said at the opening of the 37th session: ‘it is imperative for this Council – and the United Nations as a whole – to focus much more on implementation and national follow-up.’

That means, primarily, concerted and determined action on the part of States. In that regard, we believe the recent development, in many States, of national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up (NMIRFs) holds enormous potential to power a new and effective human rights ‘implementation agenda.’ We thus believe it is time to think about a new informal process of regional consultations to exchange good practice, discuss challenges and identify common principles.

It also means driving improvements in the way the UN system supports State implementation of international obligations and commitments. Again, as the Secretary-General noted: the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms ‘must be weaved into UN action at all levels,’ but especially at the level of national planning and delivery through UN Country Teams. This is vital not only for the enjoyment of human rights, but also for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and for the broader efforts on domestic resilience and prevention.

Thank you.