

Right of Reply
Exercised by the Delegation of The Arab Republic of Egypt
(Agenda item 2- ID with the High Commissioner for Human Rights)
7 March 2014

Mr. President

The Delegation of Egypt exercises its right of reply in response to what was mentioned in the “so called” Cross-regional Statement delivered by Iceland, a statement where we see that the limited number of countries signing it shows the real size of the support enjoyed by the false – driven message of the statement. We are also responding to what was mentioned in the national statements of: the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, taking into consideration that all of these statements exceeded by far the scope of Agenda Item 2 which was supposed to relate to the discussion of the High Commissioner's report and the Interactive Dialogue with her.

First of all, we would like to express our surprise of the decision of the signatories to this statement to take this step, which shows that they are either unaware of, or not evaluating rightly the size and magnitude of the transformation process intertwined dimensions taking place now in a big country like Egypt which is on its way towards building a democratic system. The resort of some groups to violence and terrorism is a great challenge that should not be underestimated. Moreover, the need to deal with security concerns to prevent allowing these groups to realize their goal of creating chaos to undermine the process of democratic transformation should not be neglected.

It is unacceptable to us to that the aforementioned group statement simply briefly refers to the threat of terrorism faced by Egypt, without mentioning those who are responsible for this terrorism, or even to express due support to the Egyptian people, before the State, who facing this danger, a thing which casts further doubts regarding the real objective aimed at from such statement.

Also, we do not find in the statement any real appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the Egyptian State and government to implement “The Future Roadmap” agreed upon from across the spectrum of the Egyptian people, and even for the success in achieving the first stage of the roadmap which is the adoption of the new constitution that includes an unprecedented section in the history of Egyptian constitutions on Rights and Freedoms. In this regard, we find it necessary to emphasize that our determination to move forward in the implementation of “The Future Roadmap” stems only from our understanding that this step is in our national interest, and not in response to external pressure. This also applies for our cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, taking into account the fact that the Office, which is suggested to be established in Cairo, is a regional office for North Africa not a country office, contrary to what was mentioned in the statements of some countries. It has to be clear that it was the Egyptian authorities who requested to host that Office, and currently consultations are undergoing with the OHCHR representatives on the terms of reference.

On the other hand, we have expected, and it seems that we were wrong, that some of our partners who have joined the abovementioned group statement would come to understand and respect that Egypt, like all other countries in the world, has a sovereign right to legislate laws and to take necessary measures deemed necessary to regulate the organization of peaceful protests and the work of journalists. This is a right that must be respected, the same as Egypt respects the laws of other countries. In this context, we reject, in form and substance, any sort of international intervention aimed at addressing the issues dealt with by the Egyptian judiciary, such as the case of the referral of a limited number of journalists to trial from among thousands of Egyptian journalists and more than 1,200 foreign correspondents working freely in Egypt, or the case of those prosecuted for those prosecuted for deliberately violating Egyptian laws. Perhaps this is a good time to remind the signatories of that group statement that an independent judiciary is a key element in the framework of the realization of the principle of Separation of Powers, which is one of the important principles of modern democracy. In this respect, I would like to refer delegates present here today to our statement delivered at the High Level Segment of this current session of the Council on March 5th, 2014.

Finally , we call upon the countries that signed to the statement to verify the truth and credibility of the information they use before criticizing others or lecturing them, and not to put also words in the mouth of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that she didn't spell out, and more importantly, to consider the credibility of their positions when they claim to be promoting the rights of peaceful protesters while setting laws that force harsh restrictions on them or oppressing them violently in some cases; and when they speak about freedom of opinion and expression and simultaneously close down newspapers and online sites and spy on millions of people; and when they call for freedom in the work of journalists and illegally follow their activities and throw them in detention camps and secret prisons without trial under the banner of the war on terror; and when they speak about the need to end impunity at the time when there are continuous and daily xenophobic and racist violations committed on their territories and when they restrict the establishment of places of worship and prohibit the establishment of cemeteries for religious minorities residing on their territory, in addition to the killing of civilians during foreign military operations, without any kind of accountability to all of these action. Maybe this is also an appropriate time to ask for cross- regional statements on these subjects, and we are certain that such statements would be supported by a much wider group of countries than that group which delivered the statement we listened to today.

Thank you