

Oral statement of Iceland under Agenda item 2

Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Mr. Vice President.

Let me start by thanking Her Excellency the High Commissioner for her comprehensive report and for the sustained efforts of her office to address human rights demands across the world. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to highlight four issues of particular importance for my Government.

Firstly, Iceland commends the efforts made in the past year to promote gender equality and women's rights. In particular those addressing violence against women, a societal ill that affects women and girls across the world regardless of economic or social status. We urge the High Commissioner to continue the focus on integrating a gender perspective and working towards that goal in collaboration with other human rights mechanisms. Iceland will continue to lend its voice and support towards that end. We will also continue to stress issues in this Council that strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights for women, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Secondly, Iceland welcomes the High Commissioner's important work on doing away with discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The report published last year: "Born Free and Equal: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in International Human Rights Law" will serve as a key reference in spelling out the inherent obligations of existing human rights conventions. Iceland fully supports efforts to abolish discrimination and

violence against the LGBT community and in mobilising support for measures that protect and promote the human rights of LGBT individuals.

Thirdly, we welcome the work of the High Commissioner on the strengthening of the treaty body system. The process has reached an important stage and we appreciate the important input and collaboration of the OHCHR and Geneva delegations to the intergovernmental process in New York. We hope that the ongoing efforts of the co-facilitators – the ambassadors of Iceland and Indonesia – will yield meaningful results that increase the effectiveness of the human rights treaty body system.

Finally, on Israel, we share the High Commissioner's call for Israel to resume its cooperation with the Human Rights Council. We are deeply concerned by the recent decision of the Israeli government to abstain from its scheduled UPR in January. This decision jeopardizes the universality of the mechanism and sets a bad precedent. We call on Israel to re-engage.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we want to emphasize Iceland's continued support for the OHCHR and its invaluable work ahead.