



PERMANENT MISSION OF NORWAY

STATEMENT

Human Rights Council 31st session.

Norwegian statement during General Debate under Item 2, country reports.

23 March 2016.

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Harriet E. Berg

Mr President,

Norway welcomes the important work carried out by the OHCHR in Colombia, and would like to reaffirm our continued support and cooperation with the office.

Norway commends the government of Colombia for their commitment to reach a negotiated settlement to the armed conflict, which we believe will have an important impact on the human rights situation in the country.

However, we are deeply concerned about the reported increase in attacks against human rights defenders and local leaders. We strongly encourage Colombia to improve protection of defenders at risk, and in particular to prioritize the investigation of cases of threats and attacks against them.

Norway commends both OHCHR in Guatemala and CICIG's notable work, in close collaboration with the Attorney General's Office, to preserve the progress Guatemala has made to overcome impunity and guarantee the full respect of human rights. This work is vital to support the comprehensive reform of the justice sector in the years to come. Norway encourages the Government of Guatemala to continue working with the OHCHR and to renew its mandate in the country beyond 2017.

We believe it is essential for Guatemala to establish mechanisms to ensure indigenous peoples participation in decision-making processes as rights-holders, in particular in relation to exploitation of natural resources. In this regard, Norway is pleased to support the Maya Program, which provides mechanisms, tools and best practices for duty bearers and duty holders.

Nevertheless, Norway is concerned about the situation of human rights defenders in Guatemala, and recent reports of criminalization of human right defenders. Norway urges Guatemala to guarantee their safety, and to publicly express support to the work of human rights defenders.

Thank you.