**UN Human Rights Council**

**46th Session**

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur**

**on the situation of human rights defenders**

8 March 2021

**Statement by the Czech Republic**

Madam President,

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the EU statement.

We welcome the Special Rapporteur’s (Ms Mary Lawlor) presentation of her first report to the Human Rights Council.

The report (on death threats and killings of human rights defenders) makes it clear. In the last 5 years, human rights defenders have been killed in almost one third of UN Member States and that represents just the tip of the iceberg.

While the information is shocking, it does not come as a surprise. We appreciate that the report puts concrete faces behind the often dry UN language. The Czech Republic expresses its deepest sympathy to the persons who lost their lives protecting human rights and to their loved ones and colleagues.

We condemn the killings, threats, reprisals and prevailing impunity that often go hand in hand with wider repressions of freedom of expression, association and assembly and the right to participate. It is the primary responsibility of States to stop practices such as misuse of foreign agents laws, online and offline incendiary statements, hit lists, bullets left on the table, coffins delivered to the door of NGOs or red-tagging.

In this Interactive Dialogue, we welcome the discussion on the ways forward. The Czech Republic strives to ensure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders at home and abroad. As part of the EU’s Guidelines and our national policies, we provide assistance to human rights defenders at risk through diplomatic engagement, concrete projects as well as public visibility efforts. We encourage states to dedicate the necessary political will and resources to prevent and respond to the attacks and threats. We welcome relevant activities of the Special Rapporteur as well as the Civil Society. You can count on the Czech support. We note with interest the potential for increased role of the private sector.

Madam Special Rapporteur,

In your report’s recommendations, the OHCHR and other United Nations agencies are advised to react faster to information on death threats to human rights defenders. How can the Human Rights Council assist in this regard?

I thank you.