

OEIGWG on TNCs and OBEs with respect to human rights

3rd session (23-27 October 2017)

Statement of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

- Check against delivery -

- Thank you Mister Chair-rapporteur for putting this relevant debate on the agenda.
- The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and would like to add a few additional remarks in its national capacity.
- There are many examples of victims who have been silenced and examples of those who spoke up for victims who have been harassed.
- The EU supports those who speak up for others. For example through our ProtectDefenders mechanism which gives human rights defenders in distress a 24/7 hotline where they can turn to for help.
- In line with this mechanism the Netherlands supports a mechanism called ShelterCity, where human rights defenders can have a reprieve of 3 months to recover from working under stress for long periods of time.

- Luckily there are also examples of companies who are willing to speak up in those cases.
- Last year a number of corporate leaders and businesses, including Unilever's CEO Paul Polman, spoke up against an anti LGBTI bill in the state of Georgia.
- When the right mechanisms are in place, victims have also proven to be able to be persistent.
- In August this year a settlement was reached between Heineken and its former employees through mediation from the Dutch OECD National Contact Point (NCP).
- The victims, claiming that Heineken wrongfully fired them, had sought for remedy through various ways, and over 15 years after date they received compensation.
- During the process Dutch embassies in African and EU countries facilitated discussions between the victims and Heineken.
- This example shows that mechanisms such as the NCPs can be successful, and can aid in giving victims a voice, and finally access to remedy.
- Voices of victims are extremely important to be heard, and the Netherlands is thankful for the testimonies given here this week. They do not only testify of their cases, but of a broad

need that all states must make strong efforts to implement their existing human rights obligations.

- Together with the EU, the Netherlands remains committed to work with all States, enterprises, civil society organizations and human rights defenders to give victims a voice and access to remedy.
- Thank you.