**ITALY**



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

***inter-ministerial committee for human rights***

**Italy’s contribution to the thematic report by UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**

**UN HCR46**

**ITALY’S CONTRIBUTION**

defenders@ohchr.org

*indicating “Human Rights Defenders mandate: Submission to the Questionnaire”*

(*1,422 words)*

Further to letter dated September 1, 2020, Italian Authorities are in a position to provide the following contribution.

**Type of Stakeholder**: Member State - Italy

The Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights (acronym in Italian, CIDU), as the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF), was established in 1978 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. It currently gathers 27 differing central Administrations and Institutions.

It is well-known for its inter-ministerial, multi-stakeholder, and participatory approach. Plus, CIDU is the main coordination body in Italy for integrated reporting to recommendations by the UN human rights mechanisms (www.cidu.esteri.it). (Edited for public release)

**Email**:

**Telephone**:

**Can we attribute responses to this questionnaire**

**To your Government publicly?**

**Yes, you can.**

Italy firmly believes in the constructive dialogue with international and regional HR mechanisms, as evidenced by our standing invitation practice since 2001, as well as with civil society and other relevant stakeholders. Against this background, mention may be made of some good practices.

**Turning to specific issues**

1. The protection of the rights and safety of human rights defenders are among the priorities of Italy's current mandate in the Human Rights Council (2019-2021).

2. Italy shares and promotes the principles contained in the so-called "Declaration on human rights defenders" (Declaration on *"The right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental* "), adopted by consensus in 1998 by the UN General Assembly.

3. We support the activities of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders set up in 2000 by the then UN Commission on Human Rights with the task of promoting the implementation of the above UN Declaration, analyzing the situation of human rights defenders in the world, making recommendations, receiving and responding to reports and appeals on the situation of human rights defenders.

4. We actively participate in the negotiations on the resolutions concerning human rights defenders, as regularly presented by Norway in the UN General Assembly (most recently in December 2019) and in the UN Human Rights Council (most recently, in June 2020, for the renewal of the three-year mandate of the Special Rapporteur ), also by co-sponsoring them. Of particular importance is the Resolution on the contribution of environmental human rights defenders to the enjoyment of human rights, environmental protection and sustainable development, approved in March 2019 in HRC and co-sponsored by Italy.

5. In 2004, the European Union, with the active contribution of Italy, adopted Guidelines on human rights defenders, with the aim of strengthening the action of European institutions and Member States in this area. The European Union also provides aid to human rights defenders through its financial instruments, in particular the Emergency Fund for human rights defenders at risk. The EU Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders (ProtectDefenders.eu) is also active, as managed by a consortium of NGOs and aimed at providing short, medium and long-term assistance of various types.

6. We actively contribute to the implementation of the EU Guidelines in third countries: our Embassies participate in EU coordination meetings, meet civil society organizations and human rights defenders, raise individual cases with local authorities, according to the procedures they evaluate more appropriate. Individual cases of particular concern are also regularly raised by the EU in the context of structured EU-third countries dialogues, to which Italy also actively contributes.

7. The situation of human rights defenders is the subject of constant attention of the Council of Europe, also thanks to the active role played by Italy. The Committee of Ministers adopted in 2008 a Declaration aimed at strengthening the measures for the protection of human rights defenders, through recommendations addressed to the Member States and to the bodies and institutions of the Council of Europe.

8. Within the OSCE, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) published the Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in 2014. As part of the 2018 OSCE Italian Chairmanship, the *Farnesina* hosted a workshop on "Protection of Human Rights Defenders: Good Practices and the Role of Italy" to deepen the issue and exchange good practices, in order to identify proposals to improve the coordination between OSCE, the EU and Member States to better protect human rights defenders.

9. Along the above lines, mention has to be made of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights (acronym in Italian, CIDU), as the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF), it was established in 1978 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. It currently gathers 27 differing central Administrations and Institutions. This is well-known for its inter-ministerial, multi-stakeholder, and participatory approach. Plus, CIDU is the main coordination body in Italy for integrated reporting to recommendations by the UN human rights mechanisms ([www.cidu.esteri.it](http://www.cidu.esteri.it)).

10. Within the framework of its activities, on October 2, 2018, for its forty anniversary, CIDU devoted an whole day event to Human Rights Defenders (also to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of relevant UN Declaration), in which a variety of stakeholders, including CSOs, academia, politicians, participated.

11. The promotion of human rights in third countries through the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and its diplomatic network implies a considerable degree of interaction with civil society, which – through its many articulations - traditionally plays a fundamental role, monitoring and pushing governments to act. A vibrant civil society is an essential element of democratic, pluralistic societies that respect diversities.

12. On this basis, Italy is active in the main multilateral fora, to support and promote the role of civil society; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has long initiated a fruitful dialogue with numerous NGOs and NGO networks, on the main issues related to the promotion of human rights in the world.

13. In addition to the fundamental interaction with the civil society implemented by the Italian Cooperation, a good practice in terms of collaboration with civil society is the Task Force established in 2014 with the main Italian civil society organizations involved in the campaign for the universal moratorium on the death penalty.

14. In brief, an ever-increasing attention is paid in particular, at various levels (multilateral, regional, national), to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and of their rights. The protection of the rights and security of Human Rights Defenders is one of the priorities of our current mandate in the Human Rights Council (2019-2021).

15. Italy has co-sponsored all the Resolutions on Human Rights Defenders that have been presented, on a regular basis, both in the General Assembly and in the Human Rights Council.

16. As earlier mentioned, within the framework of the Italian OSCE 2018 Presidency, the MAECI organized a workshop entitled "Protection of human rights defenders: good practices and Italy's role", to spread and consolidate awareness of issues related to the protection of human rights defenders

17.At the national level, as a way of examples, in 2017 the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies approved a Resolution (No.7-01051), which commits the Italian Government to foster coordination between public Authorities and non-governmental organizations and religious bodies, to create a safety network in the countries of origin of the Defenders.

18. Moreover, the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights is profoundly committed to fostering and enhancing dialogue with CSOs. As a way of examples, we have extensively involved Civil Society in the elaboration of both the first National Plan of Action on Business and Human Rights and the third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, under which it has been established an open-ended Working Group on 1325 that continues its work, including in view of the preparation of the new NAP on WPS. Most importantly, both the above National Action Plans do consider the situation of HRDs.

19. Act No.125/2014 created a new institutional and governance system for Development Co-operation, in order to ensure political oversight and co-ordination at all levels, pursuing a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. This Law recognizes the value of an inclusive and systemic dialogue between policy-makers and between policy-makers and key stakeholders – CSOs, academia and research institutions, private sector, philanthropic organizations and foundations, representatives of the diaspora communities – through the *National Council for Development Co-operation* (CNCS). The latter is the main participatory instrument to facilitate dialogue between government, private and other development stakeholders and to share proposals and ideas on issues related to development co-operation.

**Conclusion**

Italian Authorities take this opportunity to reiterate their full commitment to cooperating with UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders and all other UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders.