

## **Input of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in response to the call of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on measures to prevent the occurrence of acts of intimidation and reprisals**

The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the opportunity to provide input on appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of acts of intimidation and reprisals against those who seek to cooperate or have cooperated with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights.

In general, freedom of association, assembly and expression are protected by law. All opinions are heard within society and within the democratic system. The government in many cases funds its own dissent to encourage pluralism. Any form of reprisals against those under the Dutch law can be addressed through the rule of law system.

The input of the Netherlands is mostly focused on question d, but also touches on related practices and support measures which could be relevant in this context.

The Netherlands encourages civil society organization's engagement with the UN or other multilateral organizations and highly values their input given their independent role in contributing to sustainable development, equality and human rights protection as well as in holding governments and private actors accountable. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the Embassies and Permanent Representations abroad, are in regular contact with civil society organisations.

Through the Dialogue and Dissent policy framework, the Netherlands provides financial and diplomatic support for 25 global civil society partnerships on different topics.<sup>1</sup> These global partnerships are active in many countries worldwide to address specific issues through lobby and advocacy. Strengthening of southern organizations is one of the priorities in this policy framework. In more than 65 countries, different types of CSO's receive support, ranging from the later international NGO's with local offices to trade unions, environmental activist organisation and small organisations with a local focus.

The Netherlands supports several other projects and initiatives to enable civil society actors to safely and securely continue their human rights work, including the Lifeline Fund managed by Freedom House. Specifically, the Netherlands support the cooperation between Lifeline and OHCHR to address the issue of reprisals within the UN system.

Within the Netherlands, more than 100 organizations working in international development have organized themselves in the 'Partos' association, with the aim to establish a strong voice towards the Dutch government and other parties. Moreover, about 20 organizations are part of the so-called 'Human Rights Consultation group' which meets with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a regular basis to discuss policy developments.

The Dutch Permanent Representations in Geneva and New York fulfill a brokering role between Dutch Civil Society Organizations and the UN if needed and requested. At the same time, the Netherlands refrains from interference with the substantive lobby and advocacy activities of CSO's with the UN system, to avoid any (appearance of) conflict of interest or dependency. The Netherlands is a staunch supporter of civil society participation in UN mechanisms and continuous to speak out against reprisals in the UN and other multilateral forums.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a complaint mechanism if anyone wishes to report any kind of misconduct by a representative from the Ministry. Moreover, there is a separate

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.government.nl/topics/grant-programmes/dialogue-and-dissent-strategic-partnerships-for-lobby-and-advocacy>

reporting mechanism for (any suspicion of) and integrity violation by any representative from the Ministry. Complaints or reports are dealt with in a confidential manner.