**EXPERT MEETING**

**“Enhancing capacity-building for local governments to incorporate human rights into all their work”**

**28 august (15h – 16:45h)**

*Mr. Gabriel Boichat, Head of the Delegation of the Government of Catalonia to Switzerland*

Good afternoon, excellencies, dear colleagues,

On behalf of the Government of Catalonia, I wish to express our gratitude and sincere appreciation for setting up initiatives like today’s sessions.

1. The Government of Catalonia is deeply engaged in the defence of human rights and holds a strong commitment to contribute through best practices. We do so by participating in calls for inputs and implementing recommendations from special procedures aimed at safeguarding the human rights of all individuals. Recently, we have extended some of these practices to special procedures addressing gender-related issues, discrimination and racism, such as the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls or the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism.
2. Despite this commitment, we currently lack official recognition as active participants in most discussions on human rights within the United Nations system. An example of this is our inability to attend sessions of the Human Rights Council and associated preparatory processes. Regrettably, this impediment introduces challenges to our comprehensive advocacy for human rights by limiting our access to crucial information and, consequently, our committed actions.
3. As the level of government closest to the citizens, local and regional governments possess the competencies, resources and obligation to defend human rights in all governing actions, both domestically and internationally. This is why Catalonia is taking action to address several human rights threats such as the rise of reactionary and anti-rights movements globally. We're doing so through actions like developing an Action Plan to support human rights defenders in Catalonia and promoting a national strategy to guarantee sexual and reproductive rights.
4. In conclusion, we urgently call upon UN bodies to implement mechanisms that ensure the participation of local and regional governments in the defence of human rights.

Thank you very much.