

**Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,  
Ms Mary Lawlor**

**Third Committee, 77<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly**

**13 October 2022**

Madam Special Rapporteur,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three Benelux countries – Belgium, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for the presentation of her report. Human rights defenders, including journalists and lawyers, play an essential role in promoting and defending the rights of people on the move. It is therefore extremely concerning that human rights defenders working to promote these and other rights continue to face grave threats.

It is especially concerning that many human rights defenders working to promote the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are often forced to work in hiding due to a fear of reprisals. This demonstrates the chilling effect of all forms of reprisals on human rights defenders. We echo your recommendation to publicly condemn all forms of reprisals, and to recognize the important role played by these and other human rights defenders and the legitimacy of their work.

The report notes that human rights defenders are often targeted on the basis of their gender or other identity. We call on all States and non-state actors to take all measures necessary to ensure a safe and enabling environment for all human rights defenders, both online and offline.

*Madam Special Rapporteur, how can States and non-state actors ensure that support and protection mechanisms reach the most vulnerable groups of human rights defenders and take into account their intersecting vulnerabilities?*