

UK: Item 4 Statement – 3 minute version

Thank you Mr President,

The UK supports the statement made by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union, and wishes to add a few remarks on situations which demand urgent attention.

We remain concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Burma, widespread and systematic human rights violations in the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea and the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We welcome the interactive dialogues held on these three situations.

The UK is concerned about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. We welcome the progress made in some areas, in particular to tackle the recruitment of child soldiers and the political commitment by the TMVP to disarm. But there are still credible reports of widespread human rights violations, including disappearances, extortion, extra-judicial killings and attacks and intimidation against the media. The murder in January of the Chief Editor of the Sunday Leader is a particular concern. We note the Government's stated commitment to investigate these incidents and urge them to make rapid progress. We are concerned about civilian safety as a result of recent hostilities. International Humanitarian Law must be respected. Humanitarian agencies must be given access to those in need. We call on Sri Lanka to make swift progress towards a political solution that addresses the legitimate concerns of all communities and provides a platform for sustainable peace.

We remain deeply troubled by continued human rights violations in Zimbabwe; the suppression of free speech, the abduction and detention of

political prisoners and the recent increase in attacks on farm owners and workers. We welcome Morgan Tsvangirai's appointment as Prime Minister as an opportunity to right the wrongs inflicted by previous administrations.

The UK is gravely concerned by the humanitarian impact caused by Sudan's expulsion of 13 international NGOs, estimated to provide 50% of the current humanitarian effort in Darfur. We urge this Council to support the UN Secretary-General's call to Sudan to overturn its decision for the sake of its people.

The annual increase in executions in Iran since 2005 and the continued use of the death penalty for crimes committed by minors should be of concern to this Council. So far in 2009 Iran has executed at least 60 people, including one juvenile. Iran continues to impose severe restrictions on freedom of expression and religion. We are alarmed at the growing use of vague national security-related charges to target human rights defenders. Seven leading members of the Iranian Bahá'í community face trial on allegations of espionage, "insulting religious sanctities" and "propaganda against the Islamic Republic" - charges which could attract the death penalty. We call upon Iran to ensure that they receive a timely, fair and transparent trial.

We believe that these countries could profit from the attention of this Council and the assistance of the international community. We are ready to offer any support we can.

Thank you Mr President