

September 29, 2021

## ORAL STATEMENT

**Human Rights Council  
48<sup>th</sup> Session, 13 September - 8 October 2021**

**Item 5**

**Interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary-General on Human Rights  
Report of the Secretary General on Cooperation with the United Nations**

The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) welcomes the report and today's interactive dialogue with Assistant Secretary General Ilze Brands Kehris.

The reports documents worrying trends in all regions of acts of reprisals and intimidation against groups and individuals cooperating or wanting to cooperate with the United Nations to protect and promote human rights.

Such reprisals and intimidation are inadmissible.

We are particularly concerned about the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the ability of human rights defenders and civil society, in particular from national level, to cooperate with the United Nations.

It is critical that the United Nations system, at all times and in particular during crisis, can receive and act upon the unique information that national level actors can bring to its attention.

This year, GANHRI has developed a Global Action Plan to support NHRIs implement the provisions of the Marrakech Declaration – adopted in 2018 – and support their work on civic space and with human rights defenders.

In implementing this plan, we will build the capacity of NHRIs to monitor civic space and situations of human rights defenders; support the establishment of national protection mechanisms; and promote positive narratives on the work of human rights defenders. A gender perspective is integrated across the Action Plan.



The Action Plan is also responding to the situation of NHRIs under threat and reprisals for carrying out their critical work to protect and promote fundamental rights. NHRIs courageously do this in accordance with their mandate and hold governments accountable for their international human rights obligations.

GANHRI is particularly worried about the situations of the NHRIs in the Philippines and in Guatemala, as reported by the ASG.

We are deeply alarmed that delays by Congress in Guatemala in the disbursement of the PDH's budget will adversely impact on the capacity of the PDH to carry out its constitutional mandate to promote and protect human rights effectively. This in turn will have severe impacts on the level of promotion and protection of human rights of the peoples in Guatemala, at a particularly critical time for human rights in the country.

We welcome the landmark decision by the United Nations Human Rights Committee which has reaffirmed the right of national human rights institutions to share information freely with the UN without reprisal.

We call on all states and other actors to respect the independence of NHRIs and ensure NHRIs can implement their mandate and functions in a safe and enabling environment, including through cooperation with the United Nations.

Together with our partners at the UN and civil society, GANHRI will continue promoting civic space and the work of human rights defenders including by bringing cases of reprisals to the attention of state authorities, the Human Rights Council and the Assistant Secretary-General.

We will continue to support this imperative work of the ASG and her mandate.