Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Baroness Warsi welcomes conclusions of UN Human Rights Council

2013-06-14

Senior Foreign Office Minister Baroness Warsi said:

The UK considers it crucial that the Human Rights Council is able to address situations of human rights violations wherever they occur. I welcome the strong action which the Council has once again taken on Syria at this session, and I am also encouraged by the Council's effective response to a range of other critical human rights situations.

The deep concern felt across the world for the spiralling horror in Syria is reflected by the two resolutions tabled in this session. The UK also welcomes the report by the Commission of Inquiry on Syria. The Commission's work continues to highlight the daily reports of violence in Syria and we support the urgent call of the High Commissioner for the international community to respond with one voice to this crisis.

The extension of the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on Belarus with a strengthened vote count demonstrates significant support from the international community for much needed independent monitoring of the human rights situation in Belarus. We are concerned that Belarus has made little progress in implementing recommendations made by the High Commissioner in her report in 2012. We urge the Government to cooperate with the UN's human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur.

I welcome the resolution on South Sudan which has been adopted by consensus. The UK remains concerned by the increase in allegations of human rights violations by security forces against civilians in South Sudan and urges the government to investigate fully all allegations of abuses and to bring perpetrators to account.

The UK welcomes the adoption by consensus, under the lead of other African countries, of a resolution on Eritrea including the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. I am also pleased with the consensus decision on Somalia. Following the London Somalia Conference, I am encouraged by the communiqué commitments of the Federal Government of Somalia which seek to protect the human rights of the Somali people. We also welcome the statement led by Burkina Faso pushing for the eradication of Female Genital Mutilation.

The UK supports the (consensual) statement by the President of the Human Rights Council on Burma, calling on the Government in Naypyitaw to ensure that people belonging to all religious minorities in the country are protected. We welcome commitments by the Government echoed in the resolution to ensure accountability for the violence in Rakhine State and other parts of the country in a full and transparent manner, and in accordance with international law and to grant the Rohingya people full citizenship rights. The return of all refugees must be safe and voluntary and consistent with internationally recognized humanitarian principles. We also encourage the Government to uphold their commitment to open an Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

I am pleased that a focus of this session has been the rights of women, their equal participation in times of political transition, and sexual violence in conflict and post conflict situations. The UK Government's initiative to prevent sexual violence in conflict is rooted in our belief that tackling the issue of sexual violence is an indispensible component of conflict prevention and peace building worldwide. We welcome the support members of the Human Rights Council and international community have shown for this initiative. It was disappointing that there was no resolution on LGBT at this session. We very much hope a resolution will be put forward in September.

During this Council session the UK joined partners to make a statement on the opening for signature of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which took place in New York on 3 June. On that day, 67 countries signed the ATT, agreeing to its principles and obligations, and starting on the path towards the Treaty's entry into force. This was a historic moment, which has the potential to save or improve the lives of millions of people.

As we look ahead to our bid for election to the Human Rights Council (2014-2016), I would like to emphasise the UK's own commitment to strengthen human rights, both domestically and internationally. We strive to be a powerful example of a county that upholds these rights, judging ourselves by the highest standards and taking corrective action where we fall short. I would also like to reiterate my strong support for the work of the Council; the UK will work to ensure it responds appropriately to all violations of human rights, wherever they occur.

Further information

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