Mr. President,
Madam Special Rapporteur,

The International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. The report highlights the vital role played by members and staff of Paris Principles-compliant national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in promoting and protecting human rights.

It also acknowledges that members and staff of NHRIs are human rights defenders in their own right, and often face serious challenges and risks in the performance of their work. This includes attacks, threats, intimidation and harassment, affecting not only defenders but often members of their families.

The ICC strongly supports the conclusions and recommendations in the Special Rapporteur’s report and echoes her call on States to:

- Follow the Paris Principles and the advice provided by the Sub-Committee on Accreditation and ICC when it comes to establishing, mandating and supporting the work on NHRIs in order to ensure that institutions are strong, independent and effective partners in the promotion and protection of human rights;

- Ensure that members and staff working for NHRIs are considered, in law and practice, as human rights defenders, and are recognised and supported as such by the Government and public authorities;
• Refrain from unduly interfering with the independence and autonomy of NHRIs; and

• Ensure that any instances of intimidation, stigmatisation, harassment or attack against the members or staff of NHRIs are promptly investigated, with perpetrators brought to justice and a remedy provided to victims.

In turn, the ICC and its member institutions will do their part in implementing the recommendations that the Special Rapporteur has directed to us. Further, we will broadly disseminate the Declaration on human rights defenders, including through translating it into local languages.

Finally, the ICC remains committed to assisting its member NHRIs to strengthen their cooperation with other human rights defenders, including in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies aimed at ensuring the protection of defenders.

Thank you