HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Twenty Fifth Session
Agenda Item 3

Oral Statement submitted by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, an A Status NHRI of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Title: Accompanying statement to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission report 'The Derry/Londonderry Report on Upholding the Human Right to Culture in Post-Conflict Societies' in response to the thematic report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights.

Mr President,

I welcome the opportunity to present this statement to accompany the report of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission 'The Derry/Londonderry Report on Upholding the Human Right to Culture in Post-Conflict Societies'. This paper has been submitted to the council in response to the thematic report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights on memorialisation processes in post-conflict and divided societies. I make this statement on behalf of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, one of the United Kingdom’s three A status national human rights institutions.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the Commission) welcomes the thematic report of the Special Rapporteur. Previous to this work and the Special Rapporteur’s earlier report on the teaching of history, the Commission believes that the promotion and protection of cultural rights in societies emerging from conflict has been a neglected area. Little guidance exists for States, cultural stakeholders and such human rights actors as national human rights institutions as to how best to uphold cultural rights in such contexts. This gap is of particular concern for the promotion of cultural rights in Northern Ireland, a society that is emerging from decades of conflict. It is in order to redress this gap in literature and policy guidance that the Commission is publishing the present report.

In addition to providing a full analysis of the international cultural rights framework as it applies in post-conflict societies and some recent trends in international policy and practice, the report is set against the backdrop of the designation of Derry/Londonderry as UK City of Culture 2013. The City of Culture experience is used as a case study to help explore the realisation of cultural rights in a post-conflict context. The opportunities and challenges this
cultural initiative presented reveal much about the wider issues of managing cultural contestation, engaging cultural leaders and facilitating shared cultural spaces that are common in societies emerging from conflict. As part of the UK City of Culture programme, the Commission organised a conference and consultation on cultural rights at the University of Ulster in co-operation with the Special Rapporteur. These discussions informed the finalisation of the report and recommendations.

In Northern Ireland this work is extremely timely and the Commission will be using the Derry/Londonderry report in advising the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive on the need to respect, protect and fulfil the right to culture. We hope that members of the Human Rights Council will find the report and its recommendations to be of assistance in guiding States as they seek to uphold the human right to culture where societies are in transition.

We look forward, Mr President, to considering the Special Rapporteur's thematic report in our future work and to further cooperation with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council.

Ends.

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