



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

New Delhi, India. London, UK. Accra, Ghana

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NGO with Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

40th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 4: General Debate on human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Oral Statement delivered by Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

Tuesday, 12 March 2019

Thank you, Mr. President.

We congratulate Fiji and the Bahamas, the first Pacific and Caribbean small island states on their election as members of the Human Rights Council. We welcome this opportunity to address and promote the critical human rights challenges for the people of small island states.

Mr. President, we are pleased by the positive steps taken by Fiji to promote human rights including the ratification of UNCAT and we urge the Fijian Government to swiftly implement the convention

Mr. President, based on information provided by our partner organisations Citizen's Constitutional Forum, PNG Tribal Foundation and Transparency International Vanuatu, we share concerns about the need to expand civil society space, including freedom of expression, assembly, media and access to information in these countries.

Mr. President, we are deeply concerned by continuing sorcery accusation related violence in Papua New Guinea with upto 7-10 cases every week of SARV there. We urge the government to enforce existing laws and prosecute both perpetrators and instigators. We believe this will be strengthened by the creation of a much needed National Human Rights Commission.

In Vanuatu, reports of extensive violence against women, including sexual violence, are deeply distressing as are sub-standard correctional facilities for detainees, particularly lack of counselling.

We urge the HRC member countries to support these SIDS in the implementation of their international and regional obligations.

Thank you Mr President.