

## **Human Rights Council- 46<sup>th</sup> Session**

### **Item 8- General Debate**

#### **Joint Statement on behalf of the Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment**

Thank you, Madam President.

I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of countries including Argentina, Canada, Estonia, France, Greece, Kenya, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea and my own country, Israel.

Sexual harassment happens all around us and its prevalence is alarming. In addition to having a detrimental impact on victims and survivors, including on their physical and mental health, or ability to remain and advance in the workplace, sexual harassment constitutes a major impediment to their full, equal and effective participation in society, as well as economic and political life.

In recent years, and particularly in the wake of the #MeToo and #Time'sUp movements, the international community has witnessed an increasing amount of reported cases of sexual harassment, including in Geneva-based organizations. While the actual number of incidents most likely is even greater than reported, it is encouraging to see that many organizations, have carefully reconsidered their policies and interventions. Nonetheless, structural challenges remain that may prevent stakeholders from reporting, and more should be done to tackle this issue, also at the international level.

In 2018, the Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment was launched in New York by France, Kenya, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Israel, as a platform to exchange good practices and raise awareness. We are proud to announce the launching of the Geneva Chapter, giving it a stronger cross-regional character, including countries from different regions as its Founding Members.

The Geneva Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment will present a platform for Member States to address this issue in all its forms, including in the workplace; to regularly exchange views and work together to advance this matter; support the efforts to promote a cultural and operational change in the UN system as a whole; establish an ongoing dialogue and consultations with UN entities and other stakeholders to identify challenges and innovative solutions and share good practices. Building on the UN Model Policy on Sexual Harassment and the UN System Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment including Sexual Harassment at UN System Events, (as well as relevant work at the ILO and WHO,) the Group of Friends will aspire to propel this issue forwards, including by liaising with the New York Group of Friends to bring to the attention of the General Assembly the activities of organizations, agencies or programs taking place in Geneva and maximizing collaboration on a global scale.

We therefore invite other Member States to join this Group, and look forward to working together with the UN towards the eradication of sexual harassment.

Thank you.