



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 51st regular session

Item 2: General Debate on the oral update by the High Commissioner

Oral statement

Delivered by: Nicolas Agostini

Mr. President, Mr. High Commissioner,

We congratulate you on your appointment as High Commissioner for Human Rights and wish you all the best in your new role.

We are fully aware that it is one of the most difficult jobs in the world, and we **reiterate** that it is vital for the High Commissioner to be “a **compelling leader** for human rights within the UN system and throughout the world.”

We encourage you to operationalise **Council resolution 45/31** by strengthening the work of the OHCHR regarding early warning signs and prevention, as well as risks of human rights emergencies. You have a key role to play as regards prevention. We encourage you to use intersessional briefings more often to bring information to the Council’s attention.

You also have a **universal mandate**. You should continue to use it to report on situations that are not formally on the Council’s agenda. Irrespective of reporting and debates requested by the Council, it is your duty to document and expose violations wherever they occur.

Mr. President,

Once again, we highlight the importance of OHCHR’s work on civic space. If developments in **Tanzania** show that positive signals from the highest level can improve a country’s situation, in **Ethiopia**, we are deeply worried about intensifying repression against civil society and journalists.

In **Sudan**, we salute the work of the Designated OHCHR Expert and call on the Office to monitor human rights violations and bring information thereon to the attention of the Council, and to advise on the further steps that may be needed. These could include the establishment of a full-fledged investigative mechanism.

Thank you for your attention.