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Appointing a highly qualified and independent freedom of opinion and expression mandate holder: Article 19, Amnesty International and others' joint oral statement¹ to the 25th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (3 – 28 March 2014)

19 March 2014

Item 5
General Debate

Mr. President,

This Council has recognised that “the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression is one of the essential foundations of a democratic society” and has called on States to “to take all necessary measures to put an end to violations of these rights and to create the conditions to prevent such violations.”

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression has since 1993 played a crucial role in informing the Human Rights Commission and subsequently the Council about the challenges and violations that people exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression face on the ground.

Three successive mandate holders have provided a voice on the international stage to individuals and groups that some State and non-State actors would rather silence, and guided States on the practical implementation of their human rights obligations.

Mr President, in June you will appoint a new mandate holder.

¹ Joint oral statement delivered by Article 19 – International Centre against Censorship, non-governmental organization in roster status. Amnesty International, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, International Service for Human Rights, Reporters Sans Frontiers International – Reporters Without Borders International, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status. Asian Legal Resource Centre, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status and Committee to Protect Journalists, non-governmental organization without consultative status, also support the views expressed in this statement.

ARTICLE 19, Amnesty International, Asian Legal Resource Centre, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Committee to Protect Journalists, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, International Service for Human Rights, and Reporters Without Borders, have submitted a joint written statement to this session (A/HRC/25/NGO/176), available at the back of the room, which sets out the criteria to ensure that candidates are independent and possess the necessary expertise to carry the mandate forwards. These criteria include:

1. Recognised expertise in responding to developments and challenges in the field of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, in particular how new technologies impact these rights globally;
2. Experience in developing legislation, policies and mechanisms for creating a safe and enabling environment for the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression;
3. Proven awareness of the particular challenges and risks specific individuals and groups may face and their particular protection needs when exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression;
4. A demonstrated commitment to the universality of international human rights law, standards and values;

Thank you.