

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

**IMADR Oral Statement: 39th session of the Human Rights Council**

**Item 9: General Debate - Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

25 September 2018

Speaker: Antoine GIBERT

Thank you Mr. President,

We express our deepest concerns over the worldwide resurgence of racial discrimination. We firmly condemn the increase in racist hate speech by politicians and government officials. This is symptomatic of the larger issue of the normalization of racism around the world. It echoes the aggressive return of racist political parties in our society, as foretold by the Durban Declaration.

Human rights defenders, especially those belonging to indigenous, minority and migrant groups, have increasingly been belittled in the fight against racial discrimination both by States and non-State actors. This fosters an inadmissible environment and stigmatization against them which has made them at great risk of reprisals, intimidations and harassment at both online and offline, with limited remedies. Just this year after the CERD reviews, participating HRDs from Sweden, Japan and Hong Kong were subject to online hate speech. We welcome that the Government of Sweden stood against such attacks, but we regret that other governments have not done the same yet, consequently tolerating racist hate speech in society. One NGO in Hong Kong was called "traitor" for standing with ethnic minorities and voicing the injustices at the CERD. Regrettably, the Equal Opportunities Commission of Hong Kong advised NGOs to remove or delete the comments; claiming NGOs are in fact promoting racism if they allowed comments to remain online.

In such dire times, human rights defenders play an imperative role in tackling the spread of racial discrimination. We call upon the Human Rights Council and its members to take firm action to protect HRDs in realizing the DDPA. This growing issue needs to be addressed urgently before all the progress achieved since the Durban Conference are undone. We cannot accept such a loss in the fight against racial discrimination and neither should the Human Rights Council.

Thank you Mr. President.