



ORAL STATEMENT, Monday 30 May 2011, HRC 17th Session, Geneva

Agenda item 2: *General Debate*

Thank you Mr President. The Association for Progressive Communication would first like to thank you for the manner in which you have engaged with civil society throughout your term.

APC welcomes the High Commissioner's opening statement to the Council and takes this opportunity to thank her and her office for their work. APC welcomes the High Commissioner's reference to recent events in the North Africa and the Middle East and the calls for dignity, equity and justice which " spread from village to village, country to country, and across the globe by email and text message and social media, in one of the most powerful examples of the exercise of the right to free expression that we have seen in decades."¹

The internet is used by billions of people around the globe and operates through a decentralised infrastructure with no single regulatory oversight. Existing agreed international human rights standards, including freedom of expression, must be the foundation for all States to respect, protect and promote human rights both offline and online. Human rights are the birth right of all and recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as universal, inalienable and indivisible.

Yet, restricting free expression, freedom of association, and the free flow of information on the internet is a global trend. APC expresses grave concern at the serious and significant human rights violations by State and non-State actors against those using the internet and related technologies for advancing democratic participation and political free speech. We call for an end to these violations and seek measures to protect and enhance democracy and movements for social justice and development.

These issues are especially relevant to agenda item 3 in this Council session relating to the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Transnational Corporations and other Businesses and to the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression and his annual report which will focus on the internet.

APC urges the Council to pay attention to the situation of people who speak out against repression, particularly women's human rights defenders. APC calls on States to uphold human rights and the rule of law, to cease interference with access to the internet, guarantee an end to internet shutdowns, and commit to ensuring the free flow of information and access to the internet for all.

Thank you Mr President.

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¹ 17th Session of the Human Rights Council, Opening Statement by Ms. Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Geneva, 30 May 2011.