

Item 6: UPR Outcomes for Rwanda

UN Human Rights Council, 31<sup>st</sup> Session

16 March 2015

ARTICLE 19, statement delivered by Andrew Smith

Mr. President,

ARTICLE 19 thanks Member States for their recommendations made to Rwanda its Universal Periodic Review, in particular those relating to freedom of expression and information.

We welcome progress since Rwanda's first review in reforming media laws and moving towards a system of media self-regulation.

On 1 June 2012, the government adopted a new media policy to strengthen media self-regulation and reduce statutory regulation. The policy allows media practitioners to regulate themselves through a voluntary process based on a code of ethics. After the promulgation of the Media Law, journalists established a self-regulation body, the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC). However, the government must still address challenges, including a lack of public understanding of self-regulation, a lack of adequate resources for RMC, and desist from interfering with RMC's work.

Against this progress, Rwanda's legal framework is still used to illegitimately restrict the right to freedom of expression, in particular media freedom. We especially note that many provisions in the Media Law fail to meet international freedom of expression standards, and must be amended.

Despite Rwanda committing to take measures to protect human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, and to ensure that allegations of harassment of journalists are impartially investigated and perpetrators brought to justice, this has not been done. The RMC has been requested to intervene on numerous occasions to protect journalists. Impunity remains a problem that must be addressed.

ARTICLE 19 therefore calls upon Rwanda to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment where human rights defenders, journalists and civil society could operate freely and unhindered. It also encourages it to take all necessary measures to protect journalists from harassment and attacks and to ensure all such cases were investigated.

We finally urge all member states to continue to monitor the implementation of these vital recommendations that Rwanda has accepted.

Thank you