**Tuesday morning, 15th October 2019 – NGO Statement**

**Siobhan Curran, Trócaire, CIDSE**

**Article 4 - Rights of Victims**

Thank you, Chair.

I would like to make a statement on behalf of CIDSE and Trócaire in relation to Article 4 on the Rights of Victims with regard to the inclusion of human rights and environmental defenders. I would like to welcome developments in the articulation of the rights of victims in the revised draft. Articles 4.9 and 4.15 enhance the recognition of the role of human rights and environmental defenders, essential to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.

This is crucial as we know that human rights defenders are being attacked, criminalised, stigmatised and murdered for standing up to defend their communities. In 2018, 321 human rights defenders were murdered, 77 per cent of whom were working on land, indigenous peoples and environmental rights.[[1]](#footnote-1) There in an additional a trend of human rights defenders being positioned as dangerous criminals and in some cases terrorists.

The mention of **environmental aspects** is essential, as many of our partner organisations experience threats while working to ensure protection of human rights related to the environment. Indeed many of these defenders are indigenous defenders. In a context of increasing threats and impunity, more concrete responses are necessary.

**Adequate and effective measures** to protect defenders should be further specified, for example through adopting legislative provisions that prohibit interference, including through the use of public or private security forces in response to the activities of any person who seeks to exercise their right to peacefully protest against and denounce abuses linked to corporate activity; refraining from restrictive laws and establishing specific measures to protect against any form of criminalization and obstruction to their work, including gender-specific violence; and fully, promptly and independently investigating and punishing attacks and intimidation of human rights defenders.

We know that women human rights defenders are targeted in gender specific ways. Intersecting structures of oppression work to marginalise women, and often attacks against women are not reported or acknowledged as attacks on human rights defenders. The specific threats and harms experienced by **women** human rights defenders should be further elaborated in Article 4.9.

Thank you.

1. Frontline Defenders [2019] ‘Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2018’. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)