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## 20th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 4 – General Debate

### **Joint Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Bahrain**

Geneva, 28 June 2012

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Madam President,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland.

Our countries attach the outmost importance to the principles that guide the work of the Human Rights Council contained in resolution 60/251 of the General Assembly. We are convinced that constructive dialogue and cooperation are essential to achieve our common goal of promoting and protecting human rights around the world.

We consider that the appointment of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry was a significant step in the right direction. We commend the report of the Commission and the commitment expressed by Bahrain to implement all its recommendations. We see the specific recommendations in the report as very valuable with a view to ensuring accountability. For this reason, we consider it of utmost importance that the recommendations of the Commission be implemented as soon as possible. The recommendations concerning freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, political prisoners, human rights activists, and allegations of torture require special attention. Accountability of those who have committed unlawful acts must be ensured.

With this in mind, we jointly express our concern over the human rights situation in Bahrain, both the violations that took place in February and March 2011 as well as the related ongoing ones. We are particularly concerned about the consequences faced by those who protested for democratic change

in a peaceful manner. We call upon the Bahraini government to fully respect their rights of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association and especially to ensure the protection of Human Rights Defenders.

To enhance the prompt implementation of the recommendations of the Commission we suggest Bahrain to seek international expertise. Therefore, Bahrain should deepen its cooperation with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association have both requested to visit Bahrain. We encourage Bahrain to find specific dates for their respective visits and engage in a constructive manner with them.

From 13 to 17 December 2011, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights undertook a technical visit to Bahrain. Nevertheless, the OHCHR has so far not been allowed to continue this engagement with the Bahraini authorities. We highlight the need for Bahrain to agree with the Office on a comprehensive cooperation plan and a permanent presence of the Office in Bahrain.

We express our hope that the willingness shown by Bahrain to address human rights violations and to restore confidence between its authorities and the people will serve the purpose of informing the Human Rights Council of all the measures undertaken to promote and protect human rights in Bahrain.

Thank you, Madam President.