Thank you, Mr Vice-President.

The Royal Government of Cambodia’s attempts to silence dissent in the country - by criminalising political opposition, shutting down media outlets, jailing journalists, and targeting human rights defenders and civil society groups who speak out – is ratcheting up. Twenty activists, artists and human rights defenders have been imprisoned since July. CIVICUS and our member organization CCHR are alarmed by this sharp deterioration of human rights, which at the moment shows no sign of abating.

The arrest of union leader Rong Chhun in July precipitated the arrest of 13 further people for calling for the release of political prisoners. In addition, recent weeks have seen environmental activists, rappers, and even a Buddhist monk detained simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression. One youth activist was arrested after leaving the OHCHR offices in Phnom Penh, where she had sought protection from fear of arrest.

Prominent rights groups have been targeted by authorities for their work and this year alone, at least fifteen journalists have been summoned or arrested by police and judicial authorities as a result of their reporting.

Repressive laws are used to curtail civic freedoms. Most recently, in April 2020, the Royal Government of Cambodia used the COVID-19 crisis to adopt a draconian state of emergency law that provides the authorities with broad and unfettered powers to restrict fundamental freedoms. A heavily criticized draft law on public order and a highly concerning draft sub-decree establishing a national internet gateway loom, brimming with potential to facilitate further human rights violations.

We question the Special Rapporteur’s suggestion that the Cambodian authorities have displayed "increased awareness of international human rights norms and standards" during her tenure as Special Rapporteur.

During this period, a systematic crackdown on political opponents, labour activists, independent media, civil society organizations and human rights defenders has transformed Cambodia’s human rights situation for the worse. Such severe, and ongoing, crackdown on all forms of dissent and curtailment of civic space should be clearly condemned.

it is increasingly clear that that the mandate is not sufficient to adequately address the current situation, nor to protect human rights defenders and civil society members in Cambodia who increasingly risk arbitrary detention, physical attacks and threats.

An escalation in human rights violations merits a similar escalation in Council action, and we call for the Council to take such action before Cambodia’s hard-fought democratic freedoms are lost completely.

Thank you.