Thank you, Mr President,

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation welcomes the timely report of the Special Rapporteur and her findings on the ways in which counter-terrorism legislation has been used to deliberately silence civil society.

The report highlights the particular effects of counter-terrorism measures on the independent press in Turkey. It outlines how the 2016 attempted coup d’état and the subsequent 2-year state of emergency caused an exponential increase in the number of arrests and detentions of journalists.

Mr President,

The report accurately depicts an alarming trend in Turkey. Since 2016, independent news outlets are rapidly disappearing, as the Turkish government has undertaken to stifle dissenting voices, in the name of loosely defined concepts such as “national security” and “public order”.

In April 2018, after a lengthy 17 month-long politicised trial, the final verdict in the case of staff and former journalists of the newspaper Cumhuriyet was announced. The indictment falsely contended that Cumhuriyet radically changed its editorial policies to produce propaganda and provide support to three groups categorised as “terrorist organisations”.

In this case and many others, the judicial process has been instrumentalised in order to retaliate against journalists for independent reporting and critical stances on the government. In February this year, the Court of Appeals upheld the rulings and the long prison sentences handed down in April 2018.
Mr President,

In exceptional circumstances, the Right Livelihood Award Laureate, Cumhuriyet, continued to bravely honour its commitment to truly independent reporting and freedom of the press, against all odds.

Journalism is not a crime and no action to counter terrorism should criminalise legitimate expression of opinion or thought and undermine the protection of human rights.

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation calls on Turkey to halt the persecution of independent media and the arbitrary detention of journalists.

Thank you.