

Human Rights Council – 38th Session

General Debate on High Commissioner for Human Rights' Oral Update

19 June 2018

Australian Statement

Version as delivered

Mr Vice-President,

Australia thanks the High Commissioner for this report and for his deep commitment, and that of his staff, which has led to his assessments of the international human rights environment throughout his tenure. We share the High Commissioner's concerns about ongoing pressure being placed on the civil society space world-wide.

Enabling environments that allow for independent and diverse voices to be heard are critical to ensure the promotion of human rights and the development of a culture of accountability.

We welcome signs in **Ethiopia** that restrictions are easing, with opposition figures returning and political prisoners being released.

Australia strongly believes that a free media is a fundamental part of any society. Australia is concerned about the prosecution of journalists and intimidation of those seeking to exercise the right of free speech in **Myanmar** and **Cambodia**, and attempts to intimidate or prevent journalists from carrying out their role in **Iran**.

Australia is deeply concerned by the increasing frequency of reprisals against human rights defenders. We note with concern reports of detention, harassment and other restrictions on civil society, media and human rights defenders in **Russia**, **Honduras** and **Nicaragua**.

Australia seeks the global abolition of the death penalty. We note with deep concern the execution carried out in **Thailand** yesterday, following a nine year hiatus. We remain deeply concerned by **Pakistan's** blasphemy legislation, and its application, which carries the death penalty. We continue to raise our concerns regarding allegations of extra-judicial killings in the **Philippines** and encourage the Philippines to cooperate with the UN system without preconditions or limitations.

This Council provides an important platform for a range of voices – states, civil society, national human rights institutions – to come together to engage in respectful and robust discourse. Australia urges all states to support the effectiveness of the Council, including through cooperative engagement with Special Procedures Mandate Holders and supporting civil society engagement with the Council's mechanisms.

Thank you