**Human Rights Council – 39th Session**

**Item 10 – Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

**25 September 2018**

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the distinguished panel. Australia is gravely concerned by the findings of the report of the High Commissioner.

Despite some progress in addressing impunity for sexual violence, we are concerned by the increase in conflict-related sexual violence, and in particular, the role of state officials as perpetrators in a significant proportion of cases.

We are also concerned by the continued repression of the right to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of association. These freedoms are vital for democratic societies.

We call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to uphold all civil and political rights and ensure that peaceful, free, fair and credible elections are held in December 2018. We remain concerned by the Government’s actions to limit the right of peaceful assembly and restrict the media, civil society and non-government organisations.

We are deeply concerned by continuing reports of detention of civil society and political activists. Australia reiterates that political prisoners and prisoners of conscience should be released in line with the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement of December 2016.

We ask what further action is being taken by political leaders to speak out against sexual violence and to protect individuals from such acts and intimidation?

**200 Words**