**Human Rights Council – 45th session**

**Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi**

**22 September 2020**

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the Commission of Inquiry for its report and continues to call on Burundi to engage with the Commission on implementing its recommendations.

The peaceful transition of power following the May 2020 elections represents a unique opportunity for Burundi to strengthen democratic institutions and safeguard against the recurrence of past human rights violations.

We urge Burundi to reopen civic space by creating a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders, journalists and civil society, and members and supporters of the opposition.

We also urge Burundi to ensure an end to the violence perpetrated by the *Imbonerakure*, achieve justice for victims, and to undertake police and security sector reform.

While this period of transition holds great promise for the people of Burundi, post-election reports of politically motivated arrests and detentions are concerning.

Australia acknowledges ongoing efforts to facilitate voluntary repatriations of Burundian refugees from Rwanda and calls on Burundi to continue to work with the UNHCR to ensure the safe, voluntary and dignified return and reintegration of all refugees.

We welcome steps taken by Burundi to reset its international engagement and to work productively with UN and other partners.  We call on Burundi to allow OHCHR to re-establish its presence in country. We ask the Commission how the international community can assist Burundi to strengthen its international engagement?

***218 words.***