**Human Rights Council – 45th session**

**Interactive Dialogue: Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela**

**24 September 2020**

**Australian Statement**

We thank the Fact-Finding Mission and welcomes their report.

Australia holds grave concerns for the human rights of the Venezuelan people. The escalating erosion of democracy by Venezuelan authorities has exacerbated an already dire human rights situation. This report documents the appalling degree to which citizens are subject to widespread and systematic human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture. Particularly disturbing are reports of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including sexual violence and psychological torture, perpetrated against opponents.

Australia strongly condemns the systematic undermining of democratic institutions by the Venezuelan authorities. The authorities continue to plan for elections on 6 December, guided by an illegitimate electoral commission, biased judiciary and unjustifiable manipulation and restriction of political parties and candidates. As planned, these elections will not meet the minimum requirements for being free or fair.

Australia also recognises the regional impact of the human rights situation in Venezuela and commends Venezuela’s neighbours for their response to the unprecedented regional migration crisis resulting from the conditions laid out by the Fact-Finding Mission.

We would like to ask the Fact-Finding Mission how accountability for alleged crimes against humanity identified in the report may contribute to the prevention of future human rights violations.

**Words: 204**