

Human Rights Council – 38th Session

General Debate on Item 8
2 July

Australian Statement

Australia is committed to promoting good governance and the rule of law. At home, we are ensuring our public institutions are transparent, accountable and responsive. Through our aid program, and especially in the Indo-Pacific, we work with partner countries, civil society and the private sector to strengthen environments in which citizens and organisations can make legitimate demands of their governments.

Free and fair elections remain a critical component of good governance. A number of countries have held or will hold elections this year. Already, we congratulate **Malaysia**, **Timor Leste** and **Armenia** for their peaceful transitions of power and strong democratic spirit. While **Iraq's** recent elections were peaceful, fraud allegations must be thoroughly investigated and the recount transparently conducted.

Australia continues to call on all states to uphold transparency, accountability and respect for due democratic processes. Australia encourages **Afghanistan** and **Zimbabwe** to build on democratic momentum to facilitate free and fair elections this year. We encourage **Thailand** to return to democracy by holding free and fair elections. As they prepare for their respective elections, we call on **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan** to respect due democratic processes.

We urge non-state actors to respect democratic processes. We were saddened by reports that more than 100 political candidates were murdered in the lead-up to **Mexico's** elections.

We continue to be deeply concerned by the narrowing of the democratic space in **Cambodia** and the **Maldives** as polling days approach.

Australia joins others, including the Lima Group, in not recognising the legitimacy of the Presidential election in **Venezuela**, a process marked by political exclusion, intimidation and voting irregularities. We also note with deep concern the oppression of civil society and the opposition ahead of **Burundi's** recent constitutional referendum.

281 Words (275 word limit)