**Human Rights Council – 39th Session**

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Cambodia**

**26 September 2018**

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur for her report. We welcome Cambodia's ongoing dialogue with the Special Rapporteur and its history of UN cooperation.

We welcome ongoing efforts by Cambodia to promote gender equality and improve the rights of women. Australia partners with Cambodia on practical initiatives to address these challenges.

However, we share the Special Rapporteur’s concerns about the human rights situation in Cambodia, which has deteriorated over the past year. We are concerned that not all political parties, civil society and media can operate freely.

Australia was disappointed the Cambodian people were not able to choose their representatives freely in the national election on 29 July. The national election process, including exclusion of the main opposition party, undermined over 25 years of progress towards democracy.

Australia urges Cambodia to take genuine steps to reopen its democracy, to allow free and open political debate without violence and intimidation. While we welcome the move to house arrest of opposition leader Kem Sokha, we call on Cambodia to release all detainees arrested for their political affiliations, human rights work or expression of their opinions.

We encourage Cambodia to re-examine changes to laws and regulations that could be used to restrict the freedoms of expression, assembly and association, in a manner inconsistent with international law.

Australia would welcome the Special Rapporteur’s views on how the Council can support Cambodia so that political parties, civil society, media and all Cambodians can freely exercise their rights.

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