**Human Rights Council – 39th Session**

**Interactive Dialogue with the Assistant Secretary General on Reprisals**

**19 September 2018**

**Australian Statement**

Australia welcomes the Secretary General’s report. We thank Mr Gilmore for his presentation. We agree it is shocking that civil society actors are suffering such extensive reprisals in response to their work.

Australia has long advocated for civil society and National Human Rights Institutions participation in the UN, as it provides a level of grassroots credibility that supports transparency, accountability and the rule of law. We are concerned at the reported treatment of every single individual named in this report, and the many more who could not be named.

We share the concerns expressed about the politicisation of the ECOSOC NGO accreditation process, which is being manipulated to silence voices that some would rather not hear. Such tactics are unjustified, and diminish the quality of the UN system to the detriment of us all.

We are troubled by reports that women and LGBTI defenders are consistently at heightened risk of intimidation, violence and degrading treatment in response to their legitimate work. This is unacceptable and must stop.

We welcome the work of the Secretary General, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions investigating alleged reprisals, highlighting the severity and prevalence of reprisals, and assisting those affected. We are encouraged by innovative approaches, such as the Human Rights Treaty Bodies’ *Joint Statement on the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders*.

The UN human rights system is showing us the way forward to combat reprisals and protect civil society. It is time that States followed this example.