**Human Rights Council – 39th Session**

**Interactive Dialogue with Independent Expert on Somalia**

**26 September 2018**

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the Independent Expert for his report. We welcome the Government of Somalia’s engagement with Human Rights Council processes, and its establishment of a National Human Rights Commission. We hope this independent body will help to address issues highlighted in the Independent Expert’s report.

We are concerned by the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in Somalia, identified in the report. Australia calls on the Government of Somalia to finalise and implement the *Sexual Offences Bill* to ensure a legal framework to protect the rights of women and girls and hold perpetrators accountable.

Australia is concerned by the discrimination and marginalisation of persons with disabilities in Somalia. We welcome commitments that Somalia made at the Global Disability Summit, and encourage their implementation, including by passing a National Disability Bill and establishing a National Disability Agency.

We call on Somalia to protect the right to freedom of expression. We are disturbed by reports of arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, harassment of, and acts of intimidation against, journalists.

The increased use of the death penalty in Somalia is concerning. We urge the Government of Somalia to implement the recommendation accepted during its 2011 Universal Periodic Review, to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty, with a view to its abolition.

The Report highlights the increasing number of displaced persons and their forced evictions. How can the international community better support the Government of Somalia to protect the rights of displaced persons?

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