

Human Rights Council – 40th Session  
Item 8: General Debate

18 March 2019

Joint Statement on Universality of Human Rights

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Spain and a group of 59 countries – a full list will be uploaded to the HRC extranet.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised the inherent dignity, and equal and inalienable rights, of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Today, we see many challenges to the notion of universality of human rights. Yet, to quote Nelson Mandela, “to deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”

We reaffirm that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. All human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis.

While recognising the significance of national and regional particularities, we reaffirm that all States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, have the duty to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We call on all UN members to give effect to our responsibilities in this regard.

As UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, noted in 2012 “no one gets to decide who is entitled to human rights and who is not.” All human beings – not some, not most, but all – are entitled to human rights.

**227 words**