

## Human Rights Council – 40th Session

### Item 10 – Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

19 March 2019

#### Australian Statement

Australia thanks the distinguished speakers for their update on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and notes issues of concern identified in the High Commissioner's report.

We commend the Democratic Republic of the Congo for holding recent elections. We call on the new Government to move swiftly to ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses committed during the electoral period, and to strengthen the independence of national oversight institutions, ensuring they have the resources to fulfil their missions.

Australia remains concerned by media restrictions and shutdowns, including those that occurred during the electoral period. Democracy relies on an open exchange of views, including through peaceful demonstration, without fear of persecution or reprisals. We encourage the Government to safeguard freedoms of expression and assembly.

Reports of inter-communal violence highlight the need for well-functioning state institutions including police and judiciary. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to thoroughly investigate alleged human rights violations by state actors, including reports of sexual and gender-based violence, and of arbitrary arrests and detentions without delay. Such measures to uphold the rule of law are vital, in order to better ensure protection of civilians and combat impunity.

We ask what action is being taken by political leaders to enhance accountability and respect for human rights among security forces?

**223 words**