

Human Rights Council – 40th Session

Item 2 – General Debate
7 March 2019

Australian Statement

Australia thanks the High Commissioner for her Annual Report.

Free and fair elections are a critical component of good governance. We are concerned by crackdowns and human rights violations during elections, including in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**. We note with concern that **Sudan** has declared a nationwide state of emergency and dissolved its government. Australia wants to see stability and peace in **Libya**, and encourages efforts by the UN-backed Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) to that effect.

Human rights apply to all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We welcome decriminalisation of homosexuality in **Angola** and **India**. We call on all countries to protect the rights of LGBTI persons, and note with concern the reports of imprisonment and torture of LGBTI persons in the **Russian Federation's** Chechen Republic.

The rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association are essential for a culture of accountability in every society. We welcome improvements in **Cambodia**, but note freedom of expression and of assembly remain restricted. We note the pressure on freedom of expression in the **Philippines**. We are deeply concerned about violent responses to protests in **Zimbabwe**. We deplore the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the **Saudi** consulate in Istanbul.

Religious freedom and tolerance are fundamental to open, multicultural and resilient societies. In **Pakistan** we welcome the acquittal of Asia Bibi, but remain concerned about the use of blasphemy legislation to discriminate against religious belief or practice.

We support a two-state solution in which **Israel** and a future **Palestinian** state co-exist in peace and security within internationally recognised borders. We urge both sides to refrain from unilateral actions that take us away from peace, including continuing violence by both sides and Israeli settlement and demolition activity.

Australia opposes the death penalty in all circumstances, for all people. We are concerned by reports that **Sri Lanka** plans to recommence executions. We welcome **Malaysia's** intention to abolish the death penalty.

322 words