

Human Rights Council – 42nd Session

Interactive Dialogue with Independent Expert on Somalia

25 September 2019

Australian Statement

Australia thanks the Independent Expert for his report.

We commend Somalia for achieving progress in its ‘human rights landscape’, in the words of the Independent Expert. We acknowledge this significant achievement in the context of ongoing conflict and security challenges.

Australia also commends Somalia’s continued engagement with human rights treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.

Australia is concerned, however, by continuing serious human rights violations and abuses in Somalia. We again urge Somalia to expedite the establishment of an independent, national human rights institution to help build a stronger framework for the promotion and protection of human rights. We also encourage the Government to enact a national disability bill.

Australia is deeply concerned by the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in Somalia. We urge Somalia to address this as a matter of urgency, including through finalising and implementing the *Sexual Offences Bill* and working to end impunity in cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

Australia is also concerned by the continued intimidation, harassment and arrest of journalists and we urge Somalia to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression.

In his report, the Independent Expert highlights the urgent need for a new constitution in Somalia. How can the international community work with the Government of Somalia to ensure the human rights of all Somalis are protected in the new constitution?

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