

Human Rights Council – 43<sup>rd</sup> session

Interactive Dialogue with Eritrea

26 February 2020

Australian Statement

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur for her oral update.

Australia acknowledges the efforts of the Eritrean Government to improve relations with the region and international community.

We also note the Government of Eritrea's acceptance of 131 Universal Periodic Review recommendations. We look forward to the full implementation of these recommendations, which should include reforms to allow for independent civil society and political organisations, and encourage Eritrea to consider accepting the remaining recommendations.

We acknowledge Eritrea's Partnership Framework with UNODC. We still have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Eritrea and urge the Government to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur. In particular, Australia remains deeply concerned by ongoing reports of forced labour and prolonged, compulsory national service. We urge Eritrea to introduce legislation that prohibits the use of forced labour, enforces reasonable time limits for national service and provides options for conscientious objection.

Australia is concerned that despite Eritrea's rapprochement with Ethiopia, the Eritrean Government unilaterally closed its borders with Ethiopia in April 2019. Australia calls on Eritrea to respect the peace agreement with Ethiopia and continue progress on implementing and institutionalising relations with its neighbours.

188 Words