**Human Rights Council – 44th session

Explanation of Vote**

 **Resolution on the central role of the State in responding to pandemics and other health emergencies, and the socioeconomic consequences thereof in advancing sustainable development and the realization of all human rights**

**Australia Statement**

**17 July 2020**

Australia thanks the core-group of South Africa, Namibia and Pakistan for bringing forward this resolution.

While late presentation of this text meant that time was limited, Australia appreciates the constructive, transparent engagement by the core-group. The concerns raised by states during negotiations have been taken on board. The result is a resolution which we hope will assist states to promote and protect human rights and other fundamental freedoms in responding to COVID-19 and future pandemics or health emergencies.

The sad reality is that the poorest and most vulnerable are those worst affected by this pandemic. We can already see its impact on development, hampering progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. International cooperation has an important role to play in responding to this crisis, and Australia is committed to working with our development partners to address the challenges of COVID-19 in the Indo-Pacific.

While recognising the central role of government in responding to pandemics and health emergencies, and their socioeconomic consequences, all stakeholders need to be part of the response, to have access to timely and accurate information online and offline, and to be involved in decisions that affect them. We recognise the crucial role of the WHO and UN partners. Civil society and the private sector also have valuable roles to play. For example, national human rights institutions, civil society and the media have been crucial to monitoring the impact of emergency measures on communities.

Australia reiterates the importance of compliance with the International Health Regulations (2005). We also reiterate the importance of ensuring that any emergency measures introduced are necessary, proportionate, transparent, non-discriminatory and temporary, in line with international human rights obligations.

***276 words***