

Human Rights Council – 44th session

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus

10 July 2020

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur for her report on human rights in Belarus and recommendations to the Government of Belarus and international community.

Australia is disappointed Belarus has not implemented previous recommendations and continues its policy of non-engagement with the Special Rapporteur. We are concerned by ongoing allegations of torture, ill-treatment or arbitrary detention and a lack of major improvements in the legal and regulatory protection of human rights in Belarus.

Australia is concerned at restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly and association. We call on Belarus to cease arbitrary detentions, arrests and fines of opposition candidates, journalists, human rights defenders and members of civil society.

Although Belarus maintains the death penalty, Australia welcomes the increased readiness of the Government to engage in a dialogue on this matter. We support the Special Rapporteur's recommendation that Belarus consider a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition.

We ask the Special Rapporteur what steps Belarus is taking to ensure freedom of assembly and expression in the lead up to the Presidential elections, scheduled for August 2020?

*178 words*