# **Human Rights Council – 45th session**

# **Item 2 - General debate on the High Commissioner’s oral update**

# **15 September 2020**

# **Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the High Commissioner for her oral update. In Australia’s final session as a member for the 2018-20 term, we reflect on some of the human rights issues we have sought to address.

We thank all members who joined the Incoming Members Pledge and reiterate the requirement in resolution 60/251 that members uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, and fully cooperate with the Council and its mechanisms. We urge all states seeking election to the Council this year to endorse the pledge.

Australia has focused on equal rights for all. Achieving gender equality is vital to economic development and to realising the full potential of all people. The COVID-19 pandemic must not undermine the progress that had been made on gender issues. Resolving complex problems requires considering a diversity of voices – of all states, in the HRC – and also individuals and civil society. We call on all HRC members to seek and hear the voices of all, including women and girls, indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, and LGBTI persons.

Australia has supported diversity of voices by promoting the right to freedom of expression. Australia recognises the vital importance of independent national human rights institutions and a robust civil society. We are deeply concerned about shrinking space for civil society around the world.

We reiterate our opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances, for all people. Australia welcomes steps taken by a number of states towards abolition, and welcomes decisions by other states to reduce the number of crimes that attract the death penalty. We urge states party to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which are considering reinstating the death penalty, to comply with their obligations under international human rights law.

**296 Words**