**Human Rights Council – 45th session**

**Item 4 General Debate**

**25 September 2020**

**Australian Statement**

Australia is proud to have consistently advanced human rights globally, including by holding others to account in line with our national values.

Australia remains deeply concerned by the **Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s** systematic widespread human rights violations, including the recent OHCHR findings of egregious violations committed against women in detention. We again urge the DPRK to respect the rights of its people and abandon its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

Australia remains gravely concerned by the **Syrian** **regime’s** consistent pattern of egregious human rights violations, including continued widespread use of arbitrary detention, torture, and sexual and gender-based violence. We are extremely disturbed by the continued use of children by many parties to the conflict. We are also deeply disappointed by the further erosion of the cross-border mechanism for the provision of humanitarian support in northern Syria.

Australia condemns the systematic erosion of democratic institutions in **Venezuela** through the corruption of judicial and electoral processes. A return to democracy is only possible through free, fair, transparent and credible elections. Australia calls on Venezuela’s authorities to respect the independence of the country’s judicial and electoral systems.

We remain deeply concerned by reports of repressive measures enforced against Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. We hold grave concerns about the widespread use of mass detentions, excessive restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, forced labour and pervasive surveillance. We urge the Chinese government to protect human rights and freedoms in **China**, including in Xinjiang, and to allow the High Commissioner meaningful access to Xinjiang at the earliest opportunity.

Australia is concerned about the use of violence against peaceful protesters in **Belarus** exercising their democratic freedoms, and the arbitrary detention of protesters, journalists and opposition members. We call for Belarus to end the violence and respect the human rights of the Belarusian people.

**302** **Words**