

## Human Rights Council – 37th Session

### Item 4 General Debate 14 March

#### Australian Statement

Australia strongly endorses the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue upon which this Council was founded.

Australia has been, and will remain, a pragmatic partner, including with countries considered under Item Four, as far as this is possible. We believe that progress is best achieved in partnership with national human rights institutions, civil society and the United Nations and its mechanisms.

We urge states to actively seek pathways to move out of Item Four consideration. A state that makes little effort to respect the inalienable human rights of its people should remain firmly in the focus of this Council.

The human rights situation in the **DPRK** remains grave. There has been no evidence the DPRK Government has made any progress to address the systemic human rights violations reported by the Commission of Inquiry in 2014. Australia urges the DPRK to put the welfare of its population above its illegal pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

Australia remains concerned by persistent discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities and women and girls in **Iran**, the widespread use of the death penalty, including on juvenile offenders, and lack of basic due process and fair trial rights, as outlined in the report of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

After seven years of widespread and shocking human rights violations, a political solution to the **Syria** crisis is badly needed. The Syrian regime must allow humanitarian access to all civilians in need, and all parties to the fighting, particularly the regime, must implement the ceasefire demanded by the UN Security Council.

We remain concerned about the impact of **Russia's** interventions in Ukraine, Syria and Georgia on the human rights situation in those countries and are gravely concerned that Prime Minister May confirmed a military-grade nerve agent of a type originally developed by Russia was used in an attempted assassination in the UK.

316 words