

13th Session of the UPR Working Group – Review of Ecuador

Statement by Austria

21 May 2012

We welcome H.E. ... and the delegation of Ecuador and thanks for their constructive participation and the national report. We note that consultations with NGOs were held in the preparation to the UPR process and encourage their continued involvement also in the UPR follow-up.

Austria commends Ecuador for the steps taken in implementing recommendations from the 1st cycle, including the ratification of the OP-CAT and the CRPD as well as efforts to combat poverty, mandatory human rights training for police forces or the updated national action plan to combat human trafficking.

Despite all the progress made, there are still challenges. Austria remains particularly concerned about restrictions on and regulations of the media and civil society, including desacato laws and a series of criminal proceedings. Freedom of the press as well as the safety of journalists are cornerstones for a functioning democracy. For Austria it is therefore highly important that journalists can move and write freely. UNESCO recently stated that the safety of journalists in Ecuador was limited. Which steps does your Government intend to take in order to ensure their safety?

There is also concern about reports on excessive use of force by security and police forces and cases of ill-treatment during police detention.

Austria offers the following recommendations:

- Guarantee the independence of the judiciary and continue the fight against corruption
- Develop mechanisms to improve the safety of journalists and ensure that all cases of attacks are investigated by independent and impartial bodies;
- Make sure that the Presidential Decree No. 982 is not applied as a way to impede the work of human rights defenders;
- Ensure that cases of excessive use of force and violence by security forces and prison authorities are immediately stopped and investigated by an independent and impartial authority;
- Include a specific provision in the National Armed Forces Compulsory Military Act that prohibits the recruitment of children.

I thank you.