**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 14th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of the Gabonese Republic**

**Statement by Australia**

Australia welcomes the delegation from the Gabonese Republic and appreciates its engagement in the Universal Periodic Review process.

We commend the Gabonese Republic’s abolition of the death penalty in February 2010 and its support, in the same year, for the United Nations General Assembly’s resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty. Building on these positive developments, Australia **recommends Gabon ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.**

We commend the Gabonese Republic for expanding free medical care to all persons testing HIV positive, including refugees. We particularly commend the free access of anti-retroviral drugs, prenatal care and delivery to all pregnant HIV-positive women.

Australia welcomes the reinstatement of Gabon’s National Commission of Human Rights, and encourages Gabon to work towards ensuring the Commission conforms to the Paris Principles, in order to increase its capacity to achieve its human rights goals.

Australia notes with concern reports that media laws are being used to restrict political criticism and opposition support. We urge Gabon to respect the legitimate rights of all its citizens to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and the right to participate in public and political life. **Australia recommends Gabon undertake further measures to ensure freedom of the press based on the decriminalisation of press offences and respect for the legitimate rights of the press.**