

# United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland National Statement

## Universal Periodic Review – Gabon

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Thank you Madame President,

The UK welcomes the progress made by the Government of Gabon since the last review, particularly the abolition of the death penalty in 2010 and progress in improving cooperation with the International Criminal Court.

We strongly support steps taken by the Government of Gabon to allow greater space for political debate. The UK recognises that the freedom of the press in Gabon is guaranteed by law, but is concerned with the self-censorship many journalists exercise for fear of retribution. This was further illustrated by the recent closure of two opposition newspapers, seemingly without following a clear and transparent process, for criticising the government.

We note the efforts that the Government of Gabon have taken to involve civil society and non-governmental organisations in undertaking this review and hope that this will continue and extend to other areas of their work, thereby giving a greater voice to marginalised and under-represented communities.

We would like to make the following **recommendation**:

- To clarify and publically document the processes and guidelines for dealing with complaints against the press, including who can make them, who they can make them to and which penalties are considered to be appropriate; as well as a rationale for these decisions.

Thank you Madame President.