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## Universal Periodic Review of Republic of Korea – 14<sup>th</sup> session

### Statement by Australia

25 October 2012

Australia welcomes the Republic of Korea's (ROK) constitutional enshrinement of human rights, and its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities since its first Universal Periodic Review.

Australia notes that the death penalty remains applicable for a wide range of offences and that the ROK has not formally committed to a moratorium. Australia, however, welcomes the fact that the ROK has not carried out an execution for fifteen years. Australia encourages ROK authorities do all they can to develop a social consensus for abolition, and **recommends that the ROK abolish the death penalty and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.**

Australia notes that, while discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, social status and disability is prohibited by the ROK's Constitution or domestic law, there remains a substantial gap between men's and women's salaries and there is no broader anti-discrimination and harassment legislation that protects groups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. **Australia recommends that the ROK adopt a comprehensive and broad-based anti-discrimination law.**

**Australia also recommends that the ROK take steps to ensure that bodies entrusted with overseeing the protection of rights, such as the National Human Rights Commission, are fully mandated and resourced.**

Australia understands the unusual environment in the ROK resulting from the North's destabilising activities which have included fatal military provocations. Australia nevertheless **recommends the ROK regularly review the application of its National Security Act, to ensure consistency with human rights principles.**

Australia notes that the ROK maintains compulsory national service for all males and **recommends that the ROK introduce alternative service for conscientious objectors.**

Nicholas Purtell