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Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 15th Session

Universal Periodic Review of Mali

Statement by Australia

We welcome Mali's participation in the Universal Periodic Review process, given the political, security and humanitarian crises it has undergone following the March 2012 coup d'état.

Australia is concerned about reports of grave human rights violations perpetrated by terrorists and extremist groups in northern Mali since March 2012. We urge terrorist and rebel groups to halt the perpetration of these grave human rights violations against civilians, in particular, extrajudicial executions, amputations, kidnappings and restrictions on civil rights, especially women's rights.

We are also deeply concerned about reports that terrorist and other armed groups are recruiting child soldiers in Mali, and urge all armed groups to cease the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Australia is concerned that the military's continuing political influence in Mali may be hampering efforts to return to constitutional democracy and the rule of law. **Australia recommends that Mali's interim government organise, as a matter of urgency, inclusive national political consultations to reinstate democracy and rule of law.**

Amid reports of increased numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons, **we recommend that Mali continue to work closely with regional bodies, the United Nations and donor partners to seek sustainable solutions to the refugee and humanitarian crisis in order to uphold human rights and protect civilians.**

While Australia recognises the sharp challenges currently faced by Mali, Australia considers it critical to the long term protection of human rights that the Government of Mali ensure that serious human rights violations are investigated and eventually prosecuted, in parallel to the investigation being undertaken by the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor.

We commend Mali's progress against female genital mutilation prior to the crisis, and **recommend that the Government of Mali continue to implement measures to protect and promote women's rights.**