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Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 15th Session

Universal Periodic Review of Serbia

Statement by Australia

Australia welcomes the strengthening of the normative and institutional human rights framework in Serbia over the reporting period. The adoption of the Anti-Discrimination Law in March 2009 and the establishment of the Office of Commissioner for the Protection of Equality in May 2010 have had a positive impact on efforts to tackle discrimination.

Australia welcomes Serbia's efforts to protect journalists. However, we are concerned that restrictive legislation and reports of interference with the media may limit freedom of expression. **We recommend Serbia continues its efforts to strengthen the institutional and normative human rights framework, particularly with regard to freedom of expression.**

Australia acknowledges Serbia's ongoing cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), particularly with regard to the arrests of Ratko Mladić and Goran Hadžić in 2011 as well as the work of the special war crimes chamber of the Belgrade District Court. **We recommend that Serbia continue to strengthen its efforts to combat impunity for serious crimes under international law by continuing its cooperation with the ICTY and ensuring that other perpetrators are prosecuted in domestic courts in accordance with international standards.**

Australia commends Serbia's launch in 2011 of a national campaign to reduce violence against children and women. **Australia recommends that Serbian authorities give full and effective implementation to this campaign in order to further reduce the occurrence of rape and domestic violence, sexual harassment, child abuse (including in educational institutions) and child marriage.**

Australia acknowledges that Serbian courts and the Office of Commissioner for the Protection of Equality have made important decisions in connection with hate-speech against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people. However, violence against members of the LGBTI community remains a serious problem and we were disappointed by the cancellation of the 2011 and 2012 Belgrade Pride Parades. **Australia recommends Serbia take concrete steps to protect its LGBTI citizens, and their freedom of assembly and expression.**

Mr. Nicholas Purtell