

16th Session of the UPR Working Group – Review of Colombia**Statement by Austria**

23 April 2013

We warmly welcome H.E. ... and the delegation of Colombia and thank them for their presentation and the national report.

Austria commends the Government for the initiatives taken in implementing the recommendations of the last review, including the ratification of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Moreover, we would like to commend you for the good cooperation with the OHCHR office in your country.

Despite all the positive progress made, there are still some challenges that have to be effectively addressed. Austria is deeply concerned about the still widespread recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups in Colombia and regrets that the situation has not substantially improved since the last UPR. We would be interested in receiving more information on your efforts to effectively prevent the recruitment of children and to protect and reintegrate those who became involved in armed groups.

We are equally concerned about reported cases of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, often used as a weapon of war by illegal armed groups and security forces. Could you give us an update on your follow-up to the visit of the SRSG on sexual violence in conflict and the implementation of her recommendations?

Another issue that we want to address is the constitutional reform to expand the power of military or police tribunals to investigate and decide on cases of human rights violations. This would pose a remarkable setback in the fight against impunity. We would like to know how you will react to the critics received at all levels, including the UN on this matter.

Finally, Austria is concerned about recent killings of activists working for the restitution of lands seized by illegal armed groups. These incidents raise concerns about the security of human rights defenders. Could you give us an overview of measures taken to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders?

Austria offers the following recommendations:

- Thoroughly investigate all cases of illegal recruitment of children in armed groups and bring the perpetrators to justice;
- Continue to take effective measures to ensure the recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration of child soldiers;
- Effectively follow-up and implement the recommendations of the SRSG on sexual violence in conflict;
- Fully implement the recommendations of the OHCHR field office as a mean to contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation on the ground;

I thank you.