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Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 16th Session

Universal Periodic Review of Cuba

Statement by Australia

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Australia welcomes the progress Cuba has made including by easing overseas travel restrictions and continuing to provide universal education and health care.

While Australia welcomes Cuba's extended moratorium on the death penalty, we **recommend Cuba remove the death penalty from its criminal statutes and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.**

We are also concerned that there are significant government restrictions on access to the internet and that the government selectively grants internet access to certain sectors. **We recommend Cuba reduce government influence and control over the internet as part of a broader commitment to freedom of expression.**

Australia welcomes the release of several long term political prisoners but is concerned by reports that police and security officials increasingly use short-term detentions to prevent independent political activity or free assembly. **Australia recommends Cuba discontinue the ongoing limitations on civil society activities, including the short-term detention of political activists. We also recommend Cuba ratify the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.**

H.E. Ambassador Peter Woolcott.