

16<sup>th</sup> Session of the UPR Working Group – Review of Cuba

Statement by Austria

1 May 2013

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

Austria welcomes some progress in the human rights situation in Cuba in the recent years. Progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and achievements in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights, especially in health and education, are a positive development.

Austria also commends the Government for measures taken in implementing the recommendations of the last review, including the ratification of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance as well as measures in the area of children's and women's rights.

However, despite all progress made, there are still challenges that persist. Several treaty bodies have concluded that freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly was restricted. Austria remains particularly concerned about an increase in short term arrests, as well as of cases of intimidation, arrests and imprisonment of journalists and members of the political opposition. Which steps does your Government intend to take to allow them to practice their profession and express their political opinion in a safe, free and independent environment?

As regards the ratification of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural rights, Austria would like to know when the review required by Cuban law and the process of ratification of these instruments will be finalised.

As a follow-up to our recommendation from the last review, Austria would like to know whether Cuba has effectively addressed the root causes of prostitution by adopting measures enhancing women's economic opportunities.

Austria offers the following recommendations:

- Guarantee a safe, free and independent environment for journalists and ensure that all cases of attacks against them are investigated by independent and impartial bodies;
- Guarantee the independence of the judiciary and ensure the right to a fair trial as outlined by the United Nations Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary;
- Issue a standing invitation to the Special Procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council;
- Ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC, the ICCPR, the ICESCR as well as the OP to the CRPD;

I thank you.