

## Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 17th Session

### Universal Periodic Review of China

#### Statement by Australia

Australia welcomes China's engagement in the UPR process. We recognise the great advances China has made in areas such as poverty reduction, health, employment and education. We also support the positive steps China has taken in certain areas since its 2009 UPR, and the ongoing practical cooperation between our two countries to support human rights, including through our bilateral Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program.

While welcoming these achievements and cooperation, we continue to have concerns in relation to a number of areas.

China indicated that Australia's 2009 UPR recommendation to strengthen the protection of ethnic minorities' religious, civil, socio-economic and political rights, pertained to measures already being implemented [2009 Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, China (paragraph 115)]. However, serious violations of these rights continue to be reported, including in Tibetan areas, as noted in the November 2012 statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. **We recommend China take further steps to strengthen the protection of ethnic minorities' religious, socio-economic and political rights, including by ensuring that reports of violations are promptly investigated in a transparent manner. We also recommend China permanently lift its restrictions on access to minority areas, including for diplomats, international NGOs and journalists.**

Australia strongly opposes use of the death penalty. We welcome the positive steps China has taken since 2009 to reduce the number of crimes to which the death penalty applies and the number of capital sentences. **We recommend that China continue to work towards eventual abolition of the death penalty.**

We are concerned by continued reports of prosecutions and arbitrary detentions in China of individuals who have been peacefully exercising rights guaranteed under the Chinese constitution to freedom of expression, association and assembly, religion and belief. Of particular concern are reports of harassment and arbitrary punishment of human rights advocates, including lawyers, their families or associates. **We recommend China, consistent with its preparation for ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, expedite legal and institutional reforms necessary to ensure that freedom of expression, association and assembly, religion and belief are fully protected in law and in practice.**

Transparency is integral to human rights accountability. **We recommend China take steps to increase transparency of its traditional and social media by doing more to implement the guaranteed rights of Chinese citizens to freedom of expression and of the press, particularly rights to criticise or make suggestions regarding any state organ or functionary.**

As an indication of its commitment to re-election to the Human Rights Council, **we recommend China enhance its cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights by agreeing to outstanding requests for visits to China; and extending a standing invitation for future UN special procedures requests.**

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Australia recognises the steps China has taken since its 2009 UPR, and **recommends China take further steps to:**

1. **strengthen protection of ethnic minorities' religious, socio-economic and political rights, ensuring reports of violations are promptly and transparently investigated;**
2. **permanently lift restrictions on access to minority areas;**
3. **work towards abolition of the death penalty;**
4. **expedite legal and institutional reforms to fully protect in law and in practice freedom of expression, association and assembly, and religion and belief;**
5. **increase transparency of its traditional and social media by guaranteeing the rights of Chinese citizens to freely critique any state organ or functionary; and**
6. **enhance cooperation with the OHCHR by agreeing to outstanding requests for visits to China; and extending a standing invitation for future UN special procedures requests.**