

**UN Human Rights Council**

**17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review**

**Review of MALAYSIA**

**Geneva, 24 October 2013**

**Statement by AUSTRIA**

*Check against delivery*

Thank you, Mr. President.

We welcome H.E. ... and the delegation of Malaysia to the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the UPR and thank them for their report.

Austria acknowledges the efforts made by Malaysia, as a multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious country, to foster a climate of moderation, tolerance as well as peaceful living together of persons with different ethnic or religious backgrounds. However, we are concerned by reports on bureaucratic restrictions for non-Islamic confessions and on increasing limitations by the state religious authorities for Muslims to freely decide how they want to live and practise their faith.

Austria recommends that the Government

- continue its efforts and engage in a structured interfaith dialogue, including religious minorities,
- take steps to resolve the conflicts of competence between civil and Sharia courts, with a view to fully protect human rights,
- take measures to ensure that all persons, including Muslims, can freely exercise their right to freedom of religion and belief, without interference by the state and including the right to change their religion.

Austria notes that the recent minor amendments to the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA) are a first step to improve the freedom of the press and to guarantee independent media coverage in Malaysia. However, in order to substantially improve the freedom of the press, additional, sincere measures, in law and in practise, are necessary.

Austria recommends that the Government take steps

- to strengthen and promote the rights of journalists and bloggers to freely exercise their right to freedom of expression,
- to raise the standards of press freedom and to adapt the PPPA to facilitate independent news media coverage,
- to ensure proper judicial oversight regarding the granting and revoking of media licenses.