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UN Human Rights Council
UPR 17th session

Statement by Sweden in the interactive dialogue with Malta

*To be delivered by Minister Counsellor Irina Schoulgin Nyoni
Geneva, October 30, 2013*

Mr President,

Sweden wishes to welcome the delegation of Malta to the UPR and to express its appreciation for the presentation of the national report.

For a number of years, Malta has been criticized by humanitarian and human rights organizations, both international and domestic, as well as by the UNHCR, due to its policy of long-term detention of asylum-seekers. Under this policy, it is possible to detain asylum-seekers for up to 18 months. Although some welcome improvements of reception standards, screening procedures etc. have been done, the European Court of Human Rights recently ruled that the human rights of a number of individual asylum-seekers have been violated by the treatment under this policy. Malta has also been criticized due to threats to send back persons arriving in Malta by boat across the Mediterranean without granting them the opportunity to apply for asylum.

Can the delegation elaborate on whether you see a need for an overall review of your asylum policy and, if so, what would be the most urgent issues to address?

Sweden recommends the Government of Malta to implement, without delay, the proposals for improved procedures and modalities as regards its asylum policy and to review its detention policy. We also recommend that such review include how to ensure that children are not detained pending age determination.

Whereas it is recognized that Malta needs support to handle the flows of migrants across the Mediterranean, Sweden recommends the Government of Malta to abide by international human rights law pertaining to migrants, including with regard to detention.

Thank you, Mr President