

UN Human Rights Council
17th Session of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review
Review of Saudi Arabia

Geneva, 21 October 2013

Statement by AUSTRIA

Check against delivery
Mr. Bandar bin Mohammed Al-Aiban, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission
Austria welcomes H.E. ... and the delegation of Saudi Arabia to the UPR and thanks for the submission of its national report.

Austria welcomes the excellent cooperation in the framework of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KACIID) in Vienna. It is our conviction that dialogue between religions can only be based on full respect for freedom of belief for all, including religious minorities. We commend H.M. King Abdullah for his initiative in this context.

However, Austria remains concerned about the lack of due process in criminal proceedings. Without a written criminal code there is room for arbitrary decisions. We are very concerned about the continued use of the death penalty, including for juveniles, as well as corporal punishments such as public flogging.

We welcome progress regarding women's rights in view of recent Shura Council initiatives, but we remain concerned that women still face severe discrimination in law and practice. Their freedom of movement is restricted and they need male permission for a number of important life decisions.

We have the following recommendations:

- (1) Promulgate a criminal code and amend the law of criminal procedure to comply with international human rights law
- (2) Ensure that capital punishment is not imposed for offences committed by persons under 18 years of age
- (3) Pass legislation that protects from discriminatory government interference the construction of buildings of worship for religious minorities
- (4) Lift the general reservation on CEDAW and amend national legislation accordingly

Allow me to conclude by re-iterating our appreciation to H.E. ... and the delegation of Saudi Arabia for their participation in the review process. We are looking forward to the acceptance and implementation of recommendations received, through a broad-based national process involving all stakeholders, including civil society.

I thank you