

18th Session of the UPR Working Group – Review of Macedonia**Statement by Austria**

30 January 2014

Austria warmly welcomes the delegation of Macedonia to the UPR. We express our appreciation to H.E. for his presentation and commend the government of Macedonia for the numerous efforts undertaken since the last review.

We remain however concerned that, despite the state's acceptance of the relevant recommendations under the first UPR, freedom of expression and freedom of the press has deteriorated in the Macedonia since 2009.

Austria is also concerned about a number of recent investigations against and cases of detention of politicians and journalists that have been perceived as politically motivated and have compromised the trust in impartial law enforcement agencies and an independent judiciary.

Another area of concern regards the repeated attacks of state and non-state actors against the LGBTI community. These incidents underscore the urgent need for legal protection against any forms of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We also believe that the high unemployment rate among the Roma population, standing at over 70%, as well as their worrying situation in regard to housing, education and access to health care needs to be more efficiently addressed.

In this regard, we would like to make the following recommendations:

- to take steps to ensure media freedom and protection of journalists, including protection from political pressure and undue civil defamation lawsuits;
- to implement measures under the rule of law chapter of the Reform Agenda as developed in the EU High Level Accession Dialogue, to ensure that law enforcement agencies and the judiciary can work independently, without being politically influenced;
- to amend anti-discrimination legislation to include sexual orientation and gender identity as specific grounds for discrimination and to open prompt, impartial and effective investigations into attacks on LGBTI individuals or organizations;
- to follow up on cases of discriminatory treatment of the Roma population in the area of employment and to provide equal chances and treatment to Roma children with regard to education;

I thank you