

United Nations Human Rights Council  
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review  
19<sup>th</sup> Session – Review of Bhutan

Geneva, 28 April 2014

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of AUSTRIA,  
Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi**

Austria warmly welcomes H.E. ... and the delegation of Bhutan to the UPR and thanks them for their report.

Austria commends Bhutan for the successful conduct of the second parliamentary elections in July 2013, and the successful development of its young democracy. We also commend Bhutan for the effective institutionalisation of an independent and well functioning judiciary.

We welcome legislative initiatives, such as the Prevention of Domestic Violence Bill, which will help to improve women's safety and we also welcome progress regarding the development of civil society organisations.

Austria is confident that more than 20 years after the exodus of the Bhutanese refugees the Government of Bhutan will take rapid and meaningful steps towards the repatriation of the refugees.

We offer the following recommendations:

- Ratify ICCPR, ICESCR, CRPD and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and consider becoming a member of ILO and ratifying the core ILO-conventions;
- Improve equal access to the legal aid system, in particular for poor and marginalized groups;
- Further enhance the environment for the development of civil society organizations, including in the area of legal awareness raising, advocacy and human rights monitoring;
- Amend relevant legislation in order to ensure civil registration to all children, including fatherless children.
- Reinvigorate the dialogue with neighbouring countries in order to allow for a return of Bhutanese refugees still living in camps across the border.

Thank you.