

Matthew Buckley

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**United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
National Statement
Universal Periodic Review - Bhutan: 30 April**

Thank you Mr President,

The UK welcomes the Bhutan delegation and would like to congratulate the country on holding their second ever National Assembly Elections in July last year. The elections demonstrate Bhutan's commitment to peace and multi-party democracy.

We note that the Constitution of Bhutan guarantees and protects the human rights of every citizen. The UK welcomes the fact that since the country's 2009 UPR Review, Bhutan has passed a number of laws upholding human rights including The Child Care and Protection Act of Bhutan 2012 and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act of Bhutan 2013.

We welcome recommendations made by the National Commission for Women and Children regarding continued support for women, particularly rural women, as a priority, by building their financial autonomy through special economic empowerment programmes. We would also note concerns reflected in the reports for this review relating to early marriage and violence against women.

We have two recommendations:

- 1. that Bhutan ratify the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention Against Torture;
- 2. that Bhutan accept the request made by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit Bhutan.

The UK would also echo wider calls for Bhutan to develop self-regulatory mechanisms for the media and consider adopting a freedom of information law.

Thank you Mr President