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19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Working Group of the UPR

UPR of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Statement by A u s t r i a**

Austria welcomes H.E. ... and the delegation of the DRC to the UPR and thanks the DRC for the submission of its national report.

We are encouraged by the DRCs recent good cooperation with the HRC, in particular in the context of the debate on sexual violence held in March and we encourage the DRC to continue to intensify its fight against impunity. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls perpetrated by members of armed groups and the armed forces in Eastern Congo remain however rampant. We recommend to improve training of security forces with regard to combating sexual violence against women and girls is improved and to ensure accountability of perpetrators..

We welcome the 2012 Plan of Action to Combat the Recruitment and Use of Children by the Armed Forces and your efforts of removing children from the army. However, we note with concern that in particular armed groups still use children on a large scale. We therefore recommend the DRC ensure that children captured by FARDC shall be treated primarily as victims, that they have access to justice and that their reintegration into their communities is facilitated. We recommend the DRC install a vetting mechanism to removes persons responsible for serious human rights and child rights violations from the security forces.

We are concerned about numerous reports that government agents have killed, tortured, and harassed journalists and civil society activists in order to silence them. We recommend to bring all perpetrators of violence against journalists and human rights defenders to justice and to ensure that journalists and human rights activists are able to pursue their activities, including by expressing criticism of government policies, without intimidation and harassment.

We welcome your recent ratification of the OPCAT. However, torture in detention facilities is still widespread. We would like to reiterate our recommendation from the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of the UPR to investigate all cases of torture and ill treatment in detention.

We are looking forward to the acceptance and implementation of recommendations received, through a broad-based national process involving all stakeholders.

I thank you