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Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 21st Session

Universal Periodic Review of Lao PDR

Statement by Australia

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Australia welcomes Lao PDR's engagement in the UPR Process and acknowledges ongoing efforts in human rights adherence.

Australia welcomes Lao PDR's commitment to incorporating recently-ratified human rights conventions into domestic legislation. **Australia recommends Lao PDR establish a formal moratorium on the death penalty with a view to ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR.**

Australia is concerned by the Lao Government's attempts to increase internet censorship. **Australia recommends Lao PDR review its decree on internet-based information control and management to ensure citizens' rights to information and expression are respected.**

Australia is concerned that civil society is not enabled to support socio-economic development and improved human rights. **Australia recommends Lao PDR facilitate an environment for local and international civil society organisations to fulfil their role.**

Australia remains concerned about the unresolved disappearance of Mr Sombath Somphone. **Australia recommends Lao PDR conduct an urgent and credible police investigation into Mr Sombath's disappearance and communicate the findings, including to address any suspicions of government involvement in his abduction.**

Australia is concerned by reports of unequal treatment of minority religious communities. Australia continues to urge improvement in village and district-level authorities' awareness of their duty to protect individual's rights to freedom of religion.

Australia welcomes Lao PDR's ongoing engagement on human rights and is committed to supporting strengthened adherence through ongoing bilateral cooperation.

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Speaker: Ms Tanya Bennett.