**Universal Periodical Review of Georgia**

**10 November 2015**

**Intervention by the delegation of Estonia**

Estonia warmly welcomes the delegation of Georgia headed by […] to its second UPR.

Estonia notes with appreciation that Georgia has become party to the majority of international human rights instruments and is fully cooperating with the special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council, as well as with treaty bodies. We would like to commend Georgia for becoming a state party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OP-CRC-AC).

Estonia welcomes the steps taken by Georgia to reform its legislation and judicial system and to implement the recommendations of the previous UPR process. We acknowledge that Georgia adopted the comprehensive and long-term Human Rights Strategy (2014-20), and subsequent Action Plan (2014-15), elaborated with the active involvement of civil society and international actors. Estonia commends Georgia for its cooperative attitude and readiness to discuss human rights issues and appreciates the open character of the discussion.

Estonia would like to invite the Georgian authorities to pay more attention to the issue of violence against women. Estonia remains concerned with regard to guaranteeing gender equality and women’s rights in Georgia, including sexual and reproductive health rights, in accordance with the principles of the CEDAW and the national legislation of Georgia.

The new Family Code prohibits the causing of pain to children, but does not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment. In our estimation, Georgia’s legislation does not send a clear message that any kind of corporal punishment is prohibited as required by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Estonia finds that an essential precondition for effective democracy is the freedom of civil society actors. There have been concerning signals about derogatory statements made by political leaders on the activities of Georgian human rights defenders. We expect Georgia to strictly condemn any signs of smear campaigns against Human Rights Defenders.

Estonia strongly supports the territorial integrity of Georgia. We express our concern regarding native language education and freedom of movement issues in occupied territories of Georgia. Estonia stands for providing free and unhindered access for Georgian and international institutions to observe the human rights situation in occupied territories. We further commend Georgia’s cooperation with the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Estonia would like to note that a number of Estonian-Georgian development cooperation projects have contributed to developing civil society and human rights broadly in Georgia. We hope to continue this cooperation.

Estonia would like to **recommend** to the Government of Georgia:

* to ensure the effective investigation of cases of violence against women, prosecute and punish perpetrators with sanctions which commensurate with the gravity of the crime and provide victims with adequate compensation, protection and assistance;
* to provide legislation explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment of children, including in the home, and consider awareness-raising activities to increase public knowledge about this issue;
* to refrain from interfering with the activities of human rights defenders and Non-Governmental Organizations and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work.

Finally, Estonia very warmly notes Georgia’s active participation in the Freedom Online Coalition in global fora and we would like to congratulate Georgia for the election as a member of the Human Rights Council.

Thank you!