

*Check against delivery*

**United Nations Human Rights Council  
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review  
23<sup>rd</sup> Session- Review of Rwanda**

**Geneva, 04 November 2015**

**Statement by Austria**

Austria welcomes H.E Johnston Busingye and the delegation of Rwanda and thanks them for their presentation and the national report.

We commend Rwanda for the positive steps taken towards implementing a number of recommendations that it accepted during its first UPR - in particular reforms aiming at bringing the 2009 media law in conformity with international standards.

Despite some positive developments however, threats and limitations to freedom of expression endure. In this regard, we are concerned by a number of persisting restrictions on the exercise of the journalistic profession including inter alia a narrow legal definition of journalists, the lack of adequate safeguards against abusive restrictions on journalists and the inadequate protection of the confidentiality of journalistic sources.

Austria is equally worried about reports of harassment and intimidation of journalists and human rights defenders and reported restrictions on their right to freedom of assembly.

Following up to the first UPR, Austria would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Take measures to protect journalists from harassment and attacks and ensure independent, credible investigations of alleged cases and the prosecution of offenders
2. Reform the penal code in line with international standards for freedom of expression, including by revising national security provisions
3. Provide full support to the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC) and cease government interference with its work and the work of the media in general
4. Develop and implement specific laws and policies to recognize and protect the work of human rights defenders
5. Ensure the prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of all violations against Human Rights Defenders, the prosecution of perpetrators, and access to effective remedies for victims
6. Ratify the Rome statute of the ICC