**44th session of the Universal Periodic Review**

**Review of Turkmenistan**

6 November 2023

**Statement by Austria**

Austria welcomes the delegation of Turkmenistan and thanks them for their presentation.

Although Turkmenistan’s constitution contains positive measures to improve the legal and institutional framework for human rights, we continue to see gaps in some areas.

Austria notes that the Human Rights Committee continues to express its concern over enforced disappearances of a large number of persons, of consistent reports of torture and ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty as well as reported deaths in custody.

We are furthermore concerned about continued reports of severe restrictions on the freedom of expression and the media, including the control of national media outlets, limiting access to foreign media, the blocking of websites and the intimidation and persecution of journalists. The HRC’s Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has issued several opinions on the imprisonment of activists and journalists.

In addition, we note with concern ODIHR’s recently published election monitoring report on the March 26 parliamentary elections, which speaks of an environment that lacks genuine competition and pluralism, and where fundamental freedoms are severely restricted despite constitutional guarantees and we would therefore like to offer the following recommendations:

* Grant full access to independent international mechanisms to all places of detention, thoroughly investigate allegations of enforced disappearances and torture and improve detention conditions in line with international standards.
* Respect the right to freedom of expression, allow media to operate without any interference and provide an enabling and protective environment where journalists and activists can exercise their human rights without reprisals.
* Fully cooperate with the UN, facilitate all pending requests for visits by the UN Special Procedures and respond favorably and constructively to the views of the Human Rights Committee.
* Implement the recommendations by ODIHR as stated in its report from Oct 9, 2023.
* Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

I thank you.