**United Nations Human Rights Council**

**28th Session of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review**

**3rd Cycle Review of Pakistan, 13 November 2017**

**Statement by Austria**

Austria warmly welcomes H.E. … and the delegation of Pakistan to the UPR and thanks them for the submission and presentation of the national report.

We commend the Government for its efforts in implementing the recommendations received during its last review, including the adoption of the so-called Anti-Rape Bill and the Anti-Honour Killings Bill in October 2016.

Austria is, however, concerned about the lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty by the Government and the high numbers of crimes that are eligible for capital punishment. In addition, the execution of juvenile offenders and persons with mental disabilities remains below internationally accepted standards.

Another area of concern is the consistently high level of enforced disappearances and killings of journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders and the subsequent impunity of perpetrators.

We further note that Pakistan has introduced the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 which risks infringing on the freedom of expression of online users.

Austria therefore would like to offer the following recommendations:

* Take effective measures to ensure the full implementation of the Anti-Honour Killings Bill and the Anti-Rape Bill and raise the legal age of marriage to 18 years in all provinces of Pakistan
* Enact legislation ensuring the right to freedom of religion or belief for all religious groups and take effective measures to prevent the abuse of blasphemy legislation and the use of violence against religious minorities
* Introduce strong legislation prohibiting attacks against journalists to effectively investigate such acts and prosecute the perpetrators as previously recommended
* Review the list of crimes punishable by death and bring the enforcement of capital punishment in line with international standards, with a view of a re-introduction of the moratorium and the eventual abolition of the death penalty.

I thank you.