**Universal Periodic Review 37 – Nepal**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands** **– 21 January 2021**

The Kingdom of the Netherlands thanks the delegation of Nepal for the presentation of its national report.

We commend the government of Nepal for its efforts undertaken to combat violence against women such as the zero tolerance policy and the national plan of action. Effective and timely implementation can, however, only be achieved if the government of Nepal allocates adequate funds and establishes monitoring mechanisms. The Netherlands encourages Nepal to do so.

The Netherlands remains concerned about developments in Nepal that limit civil liberties and hinder the work of lawyers and human rights defenders. Additionally, concerns remain regarding freedom of religion or belief, and the right to not believe. Everyone, including women and girls from the Dalit community should have the full legal freedom to choose their own religion or belief and have the right to have no religion at all.

The Netherlands **recommends** Nepal to

1. Introduce and implement measures to protect lawyers and human rights defenders, including investigating and prosecuting all forms of attacks against them.
2. Amend article 26 of the Constitution to include the right to choose or change one’s religion or belief, in accordance with Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Netherlands wishes Nepal success with the implementation of the recommendations it receives during this third UPR cycle.

Thank you.