**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 37th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of Mauritania**

**Statement by Australia**

**19 January 2021**

Thank you, Madam Vice President

Australia welcomes Mauritania’s continued collaboration with international partners to combat extremism, radicalisation and terrorism.

We are concerned by reports of high rates of female genital mutilation (FGM), especially in rural areas, and urge Mauritania to enforce the country’s general code on child protection which criminalises FGM.

We also urge Mauritania to respect religious freedom as a human right and to promote religious tolerance.

**Australia recommends that** **Mauritania**:

1. **Decriminalise apostasy and amend the Constitution to protect freedom of religion and allow people of a non-Muslim faith to remain citizens.**
2. **Take action to identify, account for and release people in slavery, support victims, and strictly enforce anti-slavery laws.**
3. **Establish a formal moratorium on the death penalty with a view to ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.**