**Universal Periodic Review 38 – Sierra Leone**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

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

The Netherlands commends Sierra Leone for steps taken to strengthen the Sexual Offence Act and ensure its effective implementation.

We regret that recommendations regarding the decriminalization of same-sex relationships were not accepted during the last review. The Netherlands continues to encourage Sierra Leone to combat discrimination and to advance equal rights of LGBTI persons.

Concerns remain regarding the widespread practice of female genital mutilation. Furthermore, concerns remain regarding arbitrary arrests of journalists and human rights defenders.

The Netherlands **recommends** Sierra Leone:

1. To adopt and implement legislation and policies to end the practice of Female Genital Mutilation, including through awareness raising campaigns.

2. To uphold the right to freedom of expression and refrain from criminalizing the legitimate activities of human rights defenders and journalists and restricting their activities and rights, including by ending arbitrary arrests of journalists and human rights defenders.

The Netherlands wishes Sierra Leone success with the follow-up of all recommendations it receives during this third UPR cycle.

Thank you.