**Statement by Romania**

**The 42nd session of the UPR Working Group: Review of Benin**

**January 26th, 2023**

Mr. President,

Romania welcomes Benin’s delegation and wishes it a successful outcome of the UPR.

We note with appreciation several political and institutional reforms carried out by Benin, including through the National Development Plan, as well as its engagement with the human rights mechanisms and the strengthening of the general legal framework through the adoption of a new Criminal Code and a new Constitution which abolish the death penalty and criminalize torture.

Nevertheless, as stated in the national report, many priorities and commitments still need to be pursued and put into practice.

We would like to constructively recommend Benin to:

1. Adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that explicitly prohibits discrimination in the public and private spheres and develop a new national action plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, equipped with adequate implementation means - budgetary resources and a rigorous assessment system.
2. Strengthen and expand the democratic space, particularly through: the exercise of the right to vote in a peaceful context of free, periodic and transparent elections; legislative reforms to guarantee the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, to prevent the arbitrary suspension of media outlets and to effectively protect the human rights defenders.
3. Stepping up efforts to combat corruption in the judicial system, reform the National Judicial Council and ensure effective access to justice for all by strengthening the legal aid system and facilitating access to a lawyer.

Thank you, Mr. President!