**43rd Session of the UPR Working Group**

**Review of Serbia**

10 May 2023

**Statement by Austria**

Austria welcomes the delegation of Serbia and thanks them for their presentation.

At the outset, the Austrian delegation would like to express its heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the recent tragic school shooting in Belgrade.

We commend Serbia for its efforts in improving the media environment and promoting journalists’ safety, including through the adoption of the Media Strategy for the years 2020-2025 and relevant Action Plans. Nevertheless, instances of intimidation, threats, and attacks against journalists persist, which is a matter of concern.

Austria also acknowledges the positive steps taken by Serbia in the area of rule of law, such as last year's judicial reform. However, effective implementation of the 2022 Constitutional amendments aimed to strengthen the independence of the judiciary as well as stronger measures to combat corruption are needed.

We commend Serbia’s collaboration with the EU and the OSCE in the common project on support for victims/witnesses and access to support services within the criminal justice system in Serbia and hope that this work can be accelerated.

Also, despite the measures adopted by Serbia in recent years, domestic violence, including femicides, and corporal punishment of children remain significant issues that require attention and action.

Austria therefore offers the following recommendations:

* Continue efforts to promote a free, independent and pluralistic media environment and fully investigate cases of threats and attacks against journalists in a timely and efficient manner;
* Improve the efficiency and independence of the judiciary, including through the introduction of monitoring tools for service delivery, work allocation and modern methods of service supervision;
* Take further measures to combat domestic violence, including by ensuring the availability of reliable and consolidated statistics on cases of violence against women, including femicide, and to strengthen the protection of victims;
* Prohibit corporal punishment of children by law, including in the family, and further strengthen protective mechanisms and measures to prevent and protect children from violence, including children with disabilities living in closed systems.

I thank you.