**United Nations Human Rights Council**

**Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review**

**30th Session – Review of TURKMENISTAN**

**Geneva, 7 May 2018**

**Statement by AUSTRIA**

We would like to thank the delegation of Turkmenistan for their report and presence today. While Turkmenistan’s new constitution represents progress and some positive measures to improve the legal and institutional framework for human rights have been taken, this UPR-cycle provides an opportunity to bring about meaningful change for the promotion and protection of human rights in practice. We positively took note of an increased number of projects of the OSCE-Center in Ashgabat in the field of human rights.

Austria notes that the Human Rights Committee last year expressed its concern over enforced disappearances of a large number of persons, of consistent reports of torture and ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty as well as reported deaths in custody. We understand that there are new reports about *incommunicado* detentions more recently, and although your country’s criminal code explicitly criminalizes torture since 2012 it seems that this provision has not been applied until now. Could the delegation kindly update us on any possible intentions to allow for prison visits by independent authorities, including international monitors?

We are furthermore concerned about continued reports of severe restrictions on the freedom of expression and the media, including the control of national media outlets, limiting access to foreign media, the blocking of websites and the intimidation and persecution of journalists. The HRC’s Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has issued several opinions on the imprisonment of activists and journalists, and has called for the release of Saparmamed Nepeskuliev who continues to be disappeared.

**We would therefore like to recommend to Turkmenistan:**

* To grant full access to independent international mechanisms to all places of detention, thoroughly investigate allegations of enforced disappearances and torture and improve detention conditions in line with international standards.
* To respect the right to freedom of expression, allow media to operate without any interference and provide an enabling and protective environment where journalists and activists can exercise their human rights without reprisals.
* To fully cooperate with the UN, to facilitate all pending requests for visits by the HRC’s Special Procedures and to respond favorably and constructively to the views of the Human Rights Committee.
* To ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

I thank you.