**Universal Periodic Review 30 – Bangladesh**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands (upload version)**

Thank you Mr. President,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands would firstly like to thank the People’s Republic of Bangladesh for so generously receiving the Rohingya refugees within its borders.

We welcome some of the steps taken by Bangladesh to reform legal restrictions on freedom of expression, especially those related to religious groups and minorities. However, we remain concerned about remaining restrictions especially with a view to the upcoming elections.

The Netherlands recommends Bangladesh to:

1. Repeal all laws and policies that restrict the activities and rights of its citizens and civil society organizations, including the Information Communication Technology Act of 2006 and the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act of 2016. We call on the authorities to adapt the new Digital Security Act, as published in January 2018, which could further suppress the freedom of expression.
2. and, to protect human rights defenders and journalists from harassment by combatting impunity and ensuring the prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of all violations against human rights defenders, the prosecution of perpetrators, and access to effective remedies for the victims.

The Netherlands strongly regrets that attacks persist on freedom of expression and freedom of religion. Instances of violence against human rights defenders, restrictive legislation, lack of effective protections, and the reluctance of the Bangladeshi government to publicly denounce attacks against human rights defenders reinforce our call to recognize and protect their work, giving full force and effect to the International Declaration on Human Rights Defenders at the national level.

We wish Bangladesh every success during the third cycle of the UPR.

Thank you, Mr. President.