Mr President,

I thank you for the opportunity to present an update on the human rights situation in Malta, with a particular focus on the developments since the second cycle report.

I also thank the delegations for the questions posed and the recommendations that they advanced.

We will be studying the latter and responding to them in due time.

Once again, I reiterate Malta’s commitment towards the UPR process, and the country’s resolve to accept as many recommendations as it is able to, in order to further improve the living standards and quality of life of our citizens.

Indeed, my country’s vision is that of an open society where all persons are free and equal in dignity and rights, and where human rights are celebrated by all.

Much has been achieved thanks to Malta’s ratification of various instruments, and its membership in the United Nations, Council of Europe and European Union.

We want to continue to build on this and aspire to climb the ladder on international indices that measure the human rights situation in the country.

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A look back to the First Cycle report, enables a fair assessment of the progress achieved, particularly in terms of minority rights and women’s emancipation.

Back then heterosexual marriage was the sole union recognised by the state, and such a union could not be formally dissolved.

Today, we have introduced divorce, cohabitation rights, civil unions and marriage equality for all couples regardless of gender and sexuality.

Similarly we have extended the right to family life through the introduction of IVF legislation, and equal adoption possibilities, to single persons and couples alike.

Families come in diverse forms, and Malta recognises them all.

We opened up towards non-Maltese persons, including non-EU nationals moving to Malta and continue to honour our obligations towards refugees and persons enjoying subsidiary protection.

We worked to ensure that persons with disability are able to live independently and indeed their inclusion in the labour market is at an all-time high.

The same can be said about the economic independence of women who have been able to join or re-enter the labour market thanks to a string of measures implemented to facilitate a work-life balance and ensure greater equality between the sexes.

The number of strategies adopted in the various fields I addressed in my speech are testament to the progress that I am referring to.

This progress is reflected in the mentality shift, whereby the formerly conservative island state of less than 500,000 inhabitants has now embraced the liberal and open society that Malta is today.

Is this enough?

It never is.

We need to continue to calibrate our efforts through the strengthening of Malta’s institutions, the increased collaboration with civil society, and the widening of social dialogue.

Human rights must inspire all future laws, and be mainstreamed across all policies and practices in the country.

Likewise, they must serve as the main reference point for all reforms that will be carried out.

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I appreciate the excellent work carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and salute High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet Jeria.

I wish her a fruitful tenure.

I thank that OHCHR for the support extended to the UPR mechanism both in terms of capacity building and assistance to States.

I thank you also for the preparation of the related documentation which is essential for the successful functioning of the UPR mechanism as a whole.

I thank my delegation for their work and support.