**Universal Periodic Review 31 - Saudi Arabia**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands - 5 November 2018**

Mr. President,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands thanks the delegation of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the presentation of its national report.

The Netherlands is concerned by the arrests and persecution of human rights defenders under Saudi Arabia’s 2014 counter-terrorism law.

The Netherlands encourages Saudi Arabia to reinforce existing reforms to promote women’s full participation in society. The Netherlands welcomes the recent repeal of the ban on women obtaining their driving license. We encourage the adoption of similar reforms in the near future.

The Netherlands **recommends** Saudi Arabia:

1. To eliminate all legal and practical obstacles to the freedom of expression and conscience of human rights defenders, thereby reconsidering the charges against prisoners who were convicted for their commitment to promoting and protecting women’s rights.
2. To establish and ensure full respect for the freedom of the press, thereby refraining from persecuting journalists and all those who voice peaceful criticism, in memory of the late Jamal Khashoggi.

The Netherlands wishes the government of Saudi Arabia every success with the implementation, reporting and follow-up of all the UPR recommendations that it receives during this third UPR cycle.

Thank you, Mr. President.