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**21 January 2019**

**32nd Session of the Universal Periodic Review**

**Review of Afghanistan**

**Statement by AUSTRIA**

Austria welcomes H.E. Mrs. Adela RAZ and the delegation of Afghanistan to the UPR and thanks them for their national report and presentation.

We appreciate the efforts undertaken by the Government in recent years in order to improve the human rights situation and to implement recommendations of the first and second cycles of the UPR. In this regard, we welcome that the entry into force of the new penal code that includes the four crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression as set out in the Rome Statute of the ICC and reduces the number of crimes to which the death penalty could be imposed. We further commend the Afghan government for ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

However, many challenges remain to be dealt with and some issues have been aggravated in the recent years. In this regard, Austria remains concerned about the lack of women’s full participation in public and political life and different forms of discrimination and violence against women, including child, early and forced marriage. We commend the government on passing a national action plan on women, peace and security as set out in UNSCR 1325 and hope to see its full and effective implementation in the years to come.

Austria is also concerned about the protection of civilians in Afghanistan. While acknowledging the government’s efforts to secure polling centres, we are concerned about the high rate of election-related violence during the 2018 elections.

Austria would therefore like to offer the following recommendations:

* Take further measures to prevent violence and eliminate discrimination against women, guarantee their full participation in public and political life, including in the peace and reconciliation process and ensure the full implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security by allocating sufficient human, technical and financial resources;
* Effectively promote and promptly implement the 2017 National Action Plan to eliminate Early and Child Marriage in full consultation with civil society and take measures to address the issue of child marriage as a coping mechanism to poverty;
* Ensure the protection of civilians and that all incidents of civilian casualties are thoroughly investigated, that those responsible are prosecuted and that remedies and reparations are provided to the victims;
* Introduce a moratorium as a first step towards the full abolition of the death penalty;