**24 January 2019**

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

**Review of (FYR) Macedonia**

**Statement by AUSTRIA**

Austria welcomes H.E. Mr. Zhernovskiand the delegation to the UPR and thanks them for their national report and presentation.

Austria welcomes the steps taken since the last review to strengthen the protection of human rights and particularly commends the Government for the ongoing reform process, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and efforts to improve the protection of victims of human trafficking.

While acknowledging a decrease in the pressure on journalists, efforts are needed to address all physical and verbal abuses and threats against them [and to improve the independence of the public broadcasters. We also welcome the progress made with regard to CSO activities and hope that in particular their legal, financial and policy framework will be improved.

In the area of LGBTI rights, the new political leadership showed courage and publicly and unequivocally supported the struggle of LGBTI persons for equality. However, the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, although announced for some time, has yet to be adopted.

Another area of concern regards the rights of persons belonging to the Roma population, especially with regard to housing, access to justice, healthcare and segregation in primary education.

Austria would therefore like to offer the following recommendations:

* Promote inclusive education, notably by improving the enrolment and the retention of students from minority groups and Roma students in particular, including in pre-school education, and by ensuring access to education for all children, specifically those without identity documentation.
* Take concrete steps to promote an enabling environment for freedom of expression and to foster professionalism and accurate reporting, including through strengthened independence of the public broadcaster.
* Adopt and implement measures to strengthen the institutions in charge of preventing and fighting corruption and encourage, from the highest political level, a more proactive attitude of all engaged actors.
* Raise awareness about discrimination and its different forms of manifestations, as well as the relevant protection mechanisms through targeted information campaigns.