**Universal Periodic Review 33 – Bhutan**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands** **– 8 May 2019**

Mr President,

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

The Netherlands welcomes the efforts made by the government of Bhutan to encourage women’s participation in politics and to increase the recruitment of women for leadership positions. The government could explore further ways and means to facilitate women’s success in the elections.

In line with SDG 5, continuous awareness-raising is needed to change the gender stereotyped mind-sets and patriarchal values on a sustained basis.

The Netherlands **recommends** Bhutan:

1. To review the registration system for religious organizations to ensure that registration is not a pre-requisite for exercising the right to freedom of religion or belief.
2. To revoke the provision on sodomy in section 213 and 214 of the Penal Code which criminalizes same-sex conduct.

The Netherlands wishes Bhutan success with the follow-up of all recommendations it receives during this third UPR cycle.

Thank you, Mr President.