**Universal Periodic Review 34 – (The Gambia)**

**Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands – (5 November 2019)**

Thank you, Mr President,

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

The Netherlands commends the Gambia’s commitment to promote and protect human rights, as demonstrated by the recent ratification of core human rights treaties and the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission.

However, the Netherlands is concerned about the persisting challenges regarding freedom of expression, including attacks on and arrests of journalists and intentional disruption of telecommunication services.

Furthermore, the Netherlands remains concerned about the high prevalence of sexual and gender based violence in the Gambia and the lack of adequate support services.

The Netherlands therefore recommends the Gambia to:

1. Bring national legal provisions in line with international standards on freedom of expression under the ICCPR, inter alia by repealing Section 173A of the Information and Communications Amendment Act (2013), and by amending sections 25 (4) and 209 of the constitution.
2. Repeal all legislation that criminalizes same-sex activities, including Criminal Code Article 144, to comply with international human rights standards and in line with SDG 5.

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

Thank you, Mr President