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UN Human Rights Council  
Eighteenth session, 12-30 September 2011

Item 6:  
Consideration of UPR reports

**BELGIUM**

Madame President,

Amnesty International welcomes Belgium's positive engagement with the Universal Periodic Review, including the consultations with civil society before the Working Group session and the subsequent debriefing. We also welcome Belgium's commitment to involve civil society in the follow-up to the review.<sup>1</sup>

Amnesty International commends Belgium for supporting a majority of the recommendations and welcomes its commitment to provide this Council with a progress report in 2013.<sup>2</sup> We also encourage Belgium to present an implementation plan to the Council.

Madame President,

In our submission to the review, Amnesty International recommended the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution fully compliant with the Paris Principles. We are pleased to note that no less than 18 States made this recommendation and applaud Belgium for supporting the establishment of such an institution.<sup>3</sup> We believe this will strengthen the protection of human rights at the national level.

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/18/3, paragraph 99.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., recommendation 100.9 (India, United Kingdom, Poland, Egypt, Afghanistan, Portugal, Australia, Norway, Spain, Democratic Republic of Congo, Palestine, Ecuador, Djibouti, Russian Federation, Chile, Burkina Faso, Malaysia).

Amnesty International also welcomes Belgium's support of recommendations to ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and to the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights;<sup>4</sup> however, we note that previous commitments by Belgium to that effect have not been met.<sup>5</sup>

Madame President,

Amnesty International takes note of Belgium's support of recommendations to provide shelter and other forms of assistance to asylum seekers.<sup>6</sup> In 2011 alone, over 1400 asylum seekers, including families with children, were left homeless. These issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency; however, in order to find durable solutions the authorities must establish a just, effective and transparent policy with regard to asylum and migration.

Finally, Madame President,

Amnesty International is concerned that Belgium considers as implemented the recommendation to eliminate the systematic detention at the border of asylum-seekers and migrants in an irregular situation.<sup>7</sup> Asylum-seekers who apply for asylum at the border are still routinely detained and, in most instances, kept in detention for the duration of their asylum procedure. We urge Belgium to ensure that detention of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants is a measure of last resort and to reflect such a provision in national law.

Thank you, Madame President.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., recommendations 100.1 (Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Norway, Spain, Brazil, Ecuador), 100.2 (Palestine), 100.3 (Spain, Brazil, South Africa).

<sup>5</sup> Letter dated 25 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium on the occasion of its candidacy for membership of the UN Human Rights Council (A/63/801).

<sup>6</sup> A/HRC/18/3, recommendations 100.52 (Norway), 100.53 (United Kingdom), 100.54 (Indonesia).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., recommendation 101.25 (Mexico).