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## Adoption of Universal Periodic Review outcome of Finland 36th Session Human Rights Council (21 September 2017)

### Oral statement by the Finnish Human Rights Centre

Thank you Chair.

This statement is made on behalf of the **Finnish Human Rights Centre (NHRI)**<sup>1</sup>.

The Human Rights Centre commends the 70 countries that took part in the dialogue and made recommendations to Finland. The Centre acknowledges the Finnish Government's positive engagement with the independent human rights bodies and with the civil society throughout the UPR process. There are of course points, where our views differ from those of the Government, but we welcome the transparent consultative process and open dialogue that has taken place.

The UPR process has clearly demonstrated its value as a tool also at the national level and as a complement to other human rights mechanisms and national processes, such as the Government's 2<sup>nd</sup> national human rights action plan adopted in February 2017 for the years 2017–2019. The Action Plan includes many concrete measures that will contribute to the implementation of the recommendations accepted in the UPR processes. This is in our view a good practice.

The Finnish Government accepted fully 120 and partially 6 of the UPR recommendations. It took note of 27 recommendations, too many in our view. In many of the accepted recommendations, the reasoning indicates that in the Government's view the issue at stake has already been positively resolved. This 'status quo' approach can result in the lack of real progress when there are no measures foreseen.

Many of the UPR recommendations concerned Finland's outdated Act on Legal Recognition of the Gender of Transsexuals. At least seven states recommended Finland to abolish the requirement for sterilization or infertility as a condition for the legal recognition of gender reassignment. The Government did not accept these

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<sup>1</sup> Finnish National Human Rights Institution is comprised of the Finnish Human Rights Centre (HRC), its Human Rights Delegation and the Parliamentary Ombudsman of Finland. Finland's NHRI was accredited with A-status in 2014.



recommendations although the current Act is clearly in breach of binding human rights obligations. In its response, the Government stated that it has not agreed on presenting the issue to the Parliament (although the proposal is ready). This approach is not in line with the generally good perception of Finland as a frontrunner in the human rights field. The Centre reiterates its call for amending the Act as recommended by several countries.

Another cluster of recommendations concerned violence against women. The Centre welcomes Government's agreement to increase its efforts including funding for shelters and improving services. The Centre also notes with satisfaction that the Government accepted most of the recommendations concerning racism, hate speech and hate crimes.

In conclusion Chair, the Finnish Human Rights Centre is committed to continuing to work with the Government to ensure transparent and continuing monitoring processes.

Thank you.