

## **Statement to the UN Human Rights Council – 48<sup>th</sup> session**

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Madam President, High Commissioner, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, I speak on behalf of the A-status institutions in our membership.

The events in Afghanistan are tragic. Since the Taliban have taken control of the country, we are especially concerned about reports of severe restrictions on women's rights, and we applaud the bravery of those women who have protested publicly about the increasing repression of their rights.

The staff and commissioners of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission have been heroic throughout its 20 years in operation. They have investigated and reported on human rights violations with extraordinary courage and commitment, often at great personal cost.

They now need our support more than ever. We call on States to offer refuge and settlement to those who have left, or want to leave, and to ensure protection for those who remain.

The end of the war does not mean the end of the international community's responsibility to the people of Afghanistan. On the contrary, the need for reliable, independent, international monitoring and reporting on human rights in Afghanistan is greater than ever.

For this reason, we call on the Human Rights Council to establish an independent, fact-finding mission on a continuing basis, to follow the events in Afghanistan, investigate allegations of human rights violations, and report its findings back annually to the Council and the General Assembly.

Thank you.