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Oral Statement by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
on the Universal Periodic Review Outcome for the Netherlands

The Netherlands' UPR: enough talk, time for action

22 September 2017

Mr President,

The ICJ makes this statement with the support of our Dutch section (Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten (NJC/M)), and civic rights organization Kompass, who together coordinated the report 'Bringing Human Rights Home' on behalf of 23 Dutch organizations that contributed to the UPR of the Netherlands.

Some aspects of the Netherlands' engagement with the UPR have been positive: the Foreign Ministry as well as UPR-info organized valuable interactions in Geneva for NGOs and delegates. Dutch politicians attended the UPR sessions, setting an important precedent. The Dutch Parliament discussed the UPR process for the first time ever.

Other aspects have been disappointing. The Dutch Foreign Minister has used the term "check-box diplomacy" in reference to States that formally engage with the UPR in Geneva but do not take the necessary steps to implement human rights at home. We fear that, ironically, the phrase could well be applied to the Netherlands itself, where the Government's "National Action Plan" does not accord with relevant OHCHR guidance, and is commonly referred to by Dutch civil society as the "No Action Plan". Indeed, Dutch civil society have yet to see any new action by the Government designed to implement the UPR recommendations.

We therefore encourage the future Minister of Interior to put an end to this passive attitude and start investing in the national coordination of

the implementation of human rights, including in relation to accepted UPR recommendations, and to engage with the Dutch Parliament on priorities and meaningful actions for the New National Action Plan.

National Action Plans and UPR recommendations are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Human Rights and the UPR are about taking action and reforming laws, policies and practices at home, not paper pushing and bureaucracy. With the Netherlands' accepted UPR recommendations now in hand, Dutch civil society's message is (to paraphrase a saying from Rotterdam): "enough talk, let's get to work!"