Universal Periodic Review of Iran, 15 February 2010

Statement by New Zealand

New Zealand appreciates the opportunity to engage with Iran in this forum. We view this as a part of our longstanding bilateral exchange on political and human rights issues. As in all such discussions we regard the benchmarks as those international human rights standards and conventions to which our countries are signatories. In many cases the response by the Iranian authorities in the post-election period fell short of these standards. We are particularly concerned about the scale and nature of the violence, arrests, torture and killing of peaceful demonstrators exercising their democratic rights.

New Zealand recommends that Iran fully comply with the international human rights obligations to which it is bound.

In this vein, New Zealand was pleased to note the closure of the Kahrizak detention facility. Similarly we welcome the Majlis’ investigation into the violations of detainees’ rights alleged to have occurred there. New Zealand notes also that, despite the prohibition in the Iranian constitution on torture, and legislation banning torture for interrogation purposes, it is still not an offence to use torture for punitive purposes. Additionally, despite the judiciary’s moratorium on the use of stoning, this method of execution has persisted as a Sharia court-mandated punishment.

New Zealand recommends that Iran agree to a visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture to investigate these and other allegations of systematic violence in detention facilities. New Zealand further recommends that Iran codify torture as an offence in law, in line with the definition in the Convention against Torture.

New Zealand abhors the use of the death penalty, especially for minors or those who committed offences while they were juveniles. New Zealand recommends that Iran honour its international commitments on the rights of children and cease these practices immediately.

New Zealand objects to discriminatory treatment against any religious, ethnic, political, social or gender group in any country, and is gravely concerned about the ongoing persecution of members of the Baha’i faith in Iran, especially the trial of the Yaran in relation to the 2008 Shiraz cultural centre bombing.

New Zealand recommends that Iran reconsider the inclusion of ‘apostasy’, ‘witchcraft’ and ‘heresy’ as capital offences in its updated Penal Code; New Zealand recommends also that the trial of the Yaran be conducted in a fair and transparent manner, consistent with Iranian law, natural justice and legal due process.