

UPR WORKING GROUP – ELEVENTH SESSION
(02-13 May, 2011)

UPR of BELGIUM – INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE
(02 May 2011)

INTERVENTION BY INDIA

Mr. President,

India welcomes the delegation of the Kingdom of Belgium led byand thanks the delegation for its presentation. The National Report provides an overview of the institutional and legislative infrastructure with regard to human rights, as well as of the measures being taken to promote and protect human rights in the country.

2. We take positive note of the several initiatives mentioned in the report. These include the impressive progress in participation of women in public and political life, emphasis on human rights education, right to legal aid, review of asylum procedures and measures to improve integration of foreigners in the society. We take note of the move towards alternatives to custodial sentences, including community service, and implementation of a diversity policy in the federal police force. The CESCR has acknowledged the steps taken by Belgium to enhance its capacity to combat racial discrimination.

3. At the same time, treaty bodies have expressed concern at the *de facto* discrimination against foreigners and minorities, including Romas, and persistence of hate speech. It has been observed that foreigners receive more severe sentences in the penal system than persons of Belgian-origin. Concern has been expressed at the lack of official recognition of minorities and of a specific provision declaring illegal and prohibiting organizations which promote and incite racial discrimination. We would request the delegation to provide information on steps being taken to address these concerns.

4. With regard to children's rights, we take note that a number of recommendations of the CRC have been implemented by Belgium, in particular, by the establishment of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child. However, concerns have been expressed about a restrictive definition of child pornography. We would request the delegation to provide us with information with in this regard.

5. Finally, several treaty bodies have expressed concerns with regard to the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism and recommended setting up of a separate national human rights institution. We recommend that Belgium consider the establishment of a national human rights institution in full accordance with the Paris Principles.

Thank you, Mr. President.