**APF statement to Human Rights Council**

Madam President

On Saturday 27 June, Ms Fatima Khalil and Mr Ahmad Jawed Folad,staff members of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, were killed in a deliberate attack as they drove to the Commission’s office in Kabul.

I say, on behalf of the 25 members of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, we are appalled by this crime.

Together with GANHRI and its members from across all regions, we stand with the Afghanistan Commission in calling on the Government of Afghanistan to conduct a thorough investigation into the attack and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Madam President

The Afghanistan Commission has experienced overwhelming challenges and suffering as a result of courageously pursuing its mandate.

A total of seven Commissioners and staff members have now been killed.

In the context of armed conflict, targeting and killing human rights defenders is a war crime.

We call on the Government of Afghanistan to strengthen protection for Commissioners and staff of its national human rights institution, as well as other human rights defenders in the country.

These attacks must end.

Madam President, thank you.