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The Permanent Mission of Austria presents its compliments to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to convey the following response to the joint communication on the draft revision of the 1912 Islam law:

Austria gratefully acknowledges the joint communication dated 31 October 2014 by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Special Rapporteur on Minority issues concerning the draft revision of the 1912 Islam Law. The existing law regarding the recognition of the adherents of Islam as a religious community ("Gesetz vom 15. Juli 1912, betreffend die Anerkennung der Anhänger des Islams als Religionsgesellschaft- Islamgesetz 1912") was adopted already more than 100 years ago in order to recognize the Islamic community as a distinct religious community in Austria. A process of modernization of this law was started in 2012. Regular meetings between government representatives and the Islamic religious societies have taken place to develop this reform of the existing law.

On 2 October 2014 a draft text was issued to stakeholders. This text was open for consultation with a deadline for comments by 7 November 2014. Subsequently, a modified text was prepared and the Council of Ministers decided on 10 December 2014 to submit the draft of the Islam Law 2014 („Bundesgesetz über die äußeren Rechtsverhältnisse islamischer Religionsgesellschaften – Islamgesetz 2014) to Parliament. This draft text for the proposed new law as well as the relevant documentation for explanation of the draft (in German) can be consulted on the following website: http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/I/I_00446/index.shtml

The reform follows the model of the laws on other religious communities in Austria. The draft explicitly stipulates that Islamic religious communities are free in belief and teaching and have the right to manifest their religion in public.

Once the law is adopted and the parliamentary process is concluded, Austria will offer a more substantive response including on the questions referred to in the joint communication. The text of the communication received from the two Special Rapporteurs was made available to the National Council of the Austrian Parliament.

The Permanent Mission of Austria avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 21 January 2015

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for Human Rights (OHCHR)
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