



Australian
Human Rights
Commission

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Sixteenth Session – New York
24 April - 5 May 2017

Agenda Item 8: Discussion of the theme “Tenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: measures taken to implement the Declaration”.

Statement delivered by: Dr June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission

Thank you Mr/Madam Chair

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we are meeting on today and pay my respects to their elders past, present and future.

I am a Bunuba woman from the Fitzroy Valley in Western Australia and the first female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner appointed at the Australian Human Rights Commission.

The Commission plays a vital role as Australia’s National Human Rights Institution in the promotion and protection of the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We do this by facilitating dialogue between Indigenous peoples and government and through regular reports to Parliament about the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I would like to acknowledge the recent visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Australia and thank her for taking the time to meet with so many of our communities.

It is timely that her visit should coincide with the 10 year anniversary of the Declaration and her statement provides a good insight into the many challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Despite numerous reports and recommendations, Indigenous Australians still remain among the most disadvantaged, the least healthy, the most likely to be imprisoned and placed in child welfare systems.

We welcome the various policy objectives set by the Australian Government towards addressing these issues, including their commitment to progressing the Declaration in Australia.

The Commission looks forward to working with the government, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to breathe life into the Declaration into what we hope will become a National Implementation Strategy.

The Commission, in partnership with National Congress has already taken a number of steps to progress the Declaration in Australia, primarily through:

- Undertaking a series of national Declaration Dialogues with Indigenous peoples
- and developing a suite of community resources to promote the Declaration

We look forward to hearing how other Indigenous Peoples, NHRIS and States are working in their countries to give practical effect to the Declaration.

Mr/Madam Chair, I make the following recommendations that the Permanent Forum through ECOSOC:

- 1. Urge all States to conduct an audit of their laws, policies and programs and embed human rights training into their bureaucracies to ensure consistency with the Declaration**
- 2. Urge all States to commit to work with Indigenous peoples and their National Human Rights Institutions, to develop National Strategies to give full effect to the Declaration which includes monitoring and evaluation and annual reporting as to the progress of such implementation.**