Thank-you Madam Chair, I am speaking on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Organisation of Australia. My name is Cathryn Eatock and I am a Gayiri and Badtjala women, from central Queensland in Australia.

The Indigenous Peoples Organisation of Australia would like to add our voice to express our grave concerns at actions taken against the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Ms Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, by the Philippine government in its listing of her and other Indigenous rights defenders as terrorists.

The Special Rapporteur’s mandate, as directed by the Human Rights Council, is to investigate and report on human rights violations. The Special Rapporteur, Vickie Tauli Corpus, and other Indigenous peoples targeted are not terrorists.

The Philippine Government and all other States have obligations under the International Covenants on Human Rights and other relevant instruments to protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons. Domestic law and their administrative application should not hinder, criminalise or stigmatise the legitimate role and important activities of the Special Rapporteur or Indigenous human rights defenders.

We call upon the Philippine’s Government to delist Vicky Tauli-Corpuz as a terrorist and for all States to take all measures necessary to ensure the rights and safety of human rights defenders.

We also call on the Australian Government and other Human Rights Council members to take concrete steps at the next Human Rights Council to defend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and request this Forum formalise this request.

With regard to future work, we note that Australia remains the only British invaded territory that did not develop a treaty with its Indigenous people. The false designation of terra nullius, or no one’s land, was legally overturned with the Mabo case in 1992, which confirmed Aboriginal sovereignty and land rights continue, but a treaty between Indigenous people and the Australian government remain unresolved.
Without a formal agreement, Aboriginal people have experienced repeated cuts in funding to our services, cuts to community governance and a retreat from self-determination. We have seen the imposition of punitive and racist legislation intent on assimilating Aboriginal people and policies designed to pressure remote communities to close.

Recommendation:

The IPO requests the Special Rapporteur undertake a study on Treaties, updating the previous study by Miguel Martinez in 1997 prior to the Declaration, to consider Treaties and how the United Nations may better support states and Indigenous peoples to monitor, implement and develop contemporary Treaties.

Thank you.