



NATIONAL CONGRESS
OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PEOPLES

**United Nations Expert Mechanism on Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Tenth Session – Geneva
10 – 14 July 2017**

Agenda Item 9: Future work of the Expert Mechanism, including focus of next annual study.

Statement delivered by: Mr Rod Little, Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

Thank you Mr/Madam Chair

On behalf of the National Congress, I acknowledge the members of the Expert Mechanism and indigenous brothers and sisters here today and pay my respects to you all.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to this item as we approach the 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration).

In these ten years, we acknowledge states, including Australia's ongoing statements of support for and commitment to the Declaration. However, in Australia whilst the intent seems genuine, substantial progress on the development of action plans to implement the Declaration is lacking, but I am pleased to say we are furthering discussions.

Mr/Madam chair, Congress has been patient and willing to be a key partner all of this time to contribute to reasonable processes and progress; however we are at crisis point.

The 2016 & 2017 Close the Gap reports affirmed crisis concerns of the National Congress and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples which are current in our communities and families.

For example, at least 50% of all Aboriginal people have some form of disability, and the likelihood of undetected conditions will see this figure much higher, especially those incarcerated; Indigenous people aged 10-17 are 26 times more likely to be incarcerated.

Family violence services are turning away up 30-40% of women because they simply do not have the capacity to service, which depicts an alarming rise in violence in families and communities.

Sector leaders responded to these facts through the historical Redfern Statement calling for urgent action from the parliament of Australia for 'new and meaningful' relations, and strengthening of existing ones to address these concerns.

Chair, I am pleased to inform that dialogue has commenced at the federal level; and the assertion by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders that we are best placed for developing priorities and solutions for addressing our needs is backed by an alliance of civil society supporters.

Our leaders have taken ownership of developing solutions; decision-making and measuring success.

However, our capacity to effectively assist and lead long lasting reform is diminished through the lack of adequate resources.

Congress commends EMRIP's future work and urge examination of systemic problems including how cycles of governments dampens hope and sustainable change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Congress supports identifying good practices and lessons learned, additionally, proposals for explicit inclusion of the Declaration in the standards of the universal periodic review; and encourage that the SDG's are intrinsically linked with the implementation of the Declaration.

We require more effective processes to guide and inform, and to demonstrate fulfilment of commitment and shortcomings.

We believe that through our unified approach we can demonstrate our self-determination and capability. We have the solutions.

Thank you Chair