

15th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2016

Australian Government Statement

Item 4

Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Thank you Mr Chair.

Australia is pleased to support the Declaration and we continue working towards achievement of its principles. We will continue to ensure that our international and domestic activities remain in line with the aspirations of the Declaration.

Australia values the important work undertaken by our National Human Rights Institution and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner in monitoring and reporting on the enjoyment and exercise of human rights by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are pleased to note that a representative from the Australian Human Rights Commission is engaging in the current session of the Forum.

Australia is a candidate for the 2018-20 term of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). Our campaign is built on five pillars: freedom of expression; good governance; gender equality and the empowerment of women; the rights of indigenous peoples; and strong national human rights institutions and capacity building.

As part of these efforts, we will continue to support global efforts to enhance participation by National Human Rights Institutions in UN bodies and processes including in the Permanent Forum. We are convinced that their engagement in UN discussions contributes to the protection, promotion and realisation of human rights for all, including indigenous peoples.

Mr Chair, I would now briefly highlight some of the practical measures Australia has taken in the mandated areas of the Forum.

Recognising that economic development often leads to improved social and cultural outcomes, we are committed to creating an environment – both in Australia and overseas – that stimulates Indigenous peoples' economic empowerment.

A key component of our approach to improving economic development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is through our Indigenous Procurement Policy introduced in July 2015. For the first time, this policy sets mandatory annual procurement targets for Australian Government agencies to award contracts to Indigenous businesses.

The policy has three parts:

- A target number of contracts that need to be awarded to Indigenous businesses;
- A mandatory set-aside of contracts for Indigenous businesses to apply in certain situations; and
- Mandatory minimum requirements for Indigenous employment and supplier use for certain Australian Commonwealth Government contracts.

In the first six months of the policy, direct and indirect contracts valued in total at more than \$91 million were awarded to 250 Indigenous businesses.

Through programmes, and policies like the Indigenous Procurement Policy, we aim to promote and demonstrate practical and effective approaches to deliver Indigenous economic development.

Thank you.