



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail UN.Geneva@dfat.gov.au

Chemin des Fins 2, Petit Saconnex, 1211 Geneva 19 Ph +41 22 799 9100 Fax +41 22 799 9175 www.geneva.mission.gov.au

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

EMRIP/2013/045

Agenda item 4: Follow-up to thematic studies and advice

July 2013

Australia thanks the Expert Mechanism for its studies on Indigenous cultures and languages, and the right to participate in decision-making with a focus on extractive industries.

We recognise the importance of preserving Australia's Indigenous languages and are committed to addressing the serious problem of language loss. The Australian Government recently launched the *Creative Australia* policy, which extends the current Indigenous Language Support Program. This policy boosts Australia's investment in maintaining and revitalising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to \$54 million over the next four years.

Australia is committed to consulting with Indigenous peoples in relation to matters that affect them and ensuring their participation in decision-making on these matters. To this end, Australia supported the establishment of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples – a national representative body to give Indigenous people a voice in national affairs. We have also prioritised the participation of Indigenous peoples in the electoral process by establishing the Indigenous Electoral Participation program. And we conducted the first National Indigenous Youth Parliament, held in May 2012, to support the development of future Indigenous leaders and to promote electoral participation by young people.

Enhancing the ability of Indigenous communities to leverage economic development opportunities from their native title rights and interests, including in relation to the extractive industries, is also a priority. Such agreements can materially contribute to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through the provision of practical benefits, while serving the interests of both Indigenous communities and other entities.

The Australia Government has released a formal statement of its agreed policy in native title dealings as a set of Indigenous Land Use Agreement Policy Principles (the ILUA Principles). These outline the Australian Government's commitment to ensuring a fair and flexible native title system, particularly through improving the process of negotiating agreements, encouraging flexibility in claim resolution and promoting sustainable outcomes.