

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2016

Draft Statement

Item 10

Future work of the Permanent Forum

Thank you Mr Chair.

We would like to acknowledge and confirm continued commitment and support to the work of the Permanent Forum. Before providing our statement on the Future Work of the Permanent Forum, we would like to briefly address some of the key issues raised by Indigenous representatives from Australia during this session.

Firstly, in response to concerns regarding WA communities. The WA government has established a process to reform regional services to improve ways programs and services are delivered in remote communities, this reform process includes consultation with communities. The WA government has stated they have no intention of forcing people off land, or preventing people from accessing country. That said, the Australian Government acknowledges the concerns expressed by remote communities and continues to work with the WA government to ensure funding from both governments can be better tailored to meet the needs of local communities.

Secondly, in response to concerns regarding self-determination, the Australian Government recognises that individuals and groups, particularly Indigenous peoples, should be consulted about decisions likely to impact on them, in particular, including through the opportunity to participate in such decisions by the formal processes of democratic government and exercise meaningful control over their affairs.

Further, Australia's statement for support for the declaration recognised the importance of self-determination for Indigenous peoples, stating that 'the Declaration recognises the entitlement of Indigenous peoples to have control over their destiny and to be treated respectfully.

Australia supports the work of Indigenous communities and organisations to build stronger governance and decision making structures and playing a greater role in pursuing economic development to achieve sustainable change.

Thirdly, in response to comments regarding constitutional recognition, as previously stated the Australian Government is committed to progress towards a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the constitution. We note the concerns raised regarding timing and likely outcomes. We acknowledge the importance of meaningful recognition, as previously stated by Ms Megan Davis, a consultation process is underway under the guidance of the Referendum Council, of which Ms Davis is a member. This consultation process will inform the way we move forward to a referendum.

Finally, I would like to advise forum members that we intend to engage in further dialogue with Indigenous representatives here from Australia to progress discussions in response to these and other issues raised throughout the forum.

I will now return to my statement on future work of the Permanent Forum.

Australia recognises and welcomes connections between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is important to acknowledge that indigenous people around the world face inequality. The 2030 Agenda – which includes the Sustainable Development Goals and the Financing for Development Agenda - is squarely focused on creating equality and promoting inclusion to ensure that no one is left behind. The 2030 Agenda therefore resonates well with the principles of the Declaration and we believe the two frameworks should be considered in parallel.

It will be important to ensure that indigenous peoples' voices are captured in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Australia supports the Permanent Forum's involvement in the follow up and review of the SDG's in order to ensure that indigenous peoples' voices, knowledge, experiences and concerns are captured too. Recognising that indigenous-driven economic empowerment often leads to improved social and cultural outcomes, Australia also urges the Forum to further consider the connections between the economic commitments in the UNDRIP and the 2030 Agenda.

The disadvantage faced by indigenous women around the world must also be addressed in order to achieve true equality and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this vein, Australia calls for their participation in the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment and in the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure their needs are heard and addressed.

2017 is the 10th anniversary of the UNDRIP, a significant moment that will enable us to stop and measure our progress in achieving its principles.

We are pleased to support the Declaration and continue working towards achieving its principles. Australia's commitment to advancing the domestic and global interests of indigenous people is now detailed in our Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Indigenous Peoples Strategy. We will continue to ensure that our international and domestic activities are in line with the aspirations of both the 2030 Agenda and the Declaration.