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EM14 Austr. AOP

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**Seventh Session – 7-11 July 2014**

**Continuation of the study on access to justice in the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples**

Australia welcomes the Expert Study on access to justice in the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. We note in particular the study’s discussion on access to justice for specific groups, including indigenous women, children and youth.

In Australia, around one in three women has experienced physical violence, and almost one in five has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. The picture is worse for indigenous women who are 31 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than other women.

On 27 June 2014, the Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, launched the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. The National Plan is a holistic strategy focused on stopping violence before it happens. Prioritising support to women who have experienced violence, strengthen ways to prevent perpetrators from committing violence, and building on the evidence base to learn more about what works.

These changes take time, which is why Australia has a long-term plan in place. Reducing indigenous disadvantage is critical to addressing the factors that put indigenous Australians at higher risk of violence and abuse.

Through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, Australia provides funding for a range of initiatives to address the unacceptably high levels of violence experienced by indigenous Australians. This includes funding for:

- community legal services, court support and counselling;
- early intervention and violence prevention activities, including community and night patrols;
- parenting support services;
- community education and community strengthening projects; and
- activities which seek to change violent attitudes and behaviours.

Additionally, Australia recognises the Study’s conclusions that the amelioration of social and economic barriers to full, effective and meaningful participation of indigenous women in society greatly enhances indigenous women’s ability to access justice. Australia’s focus on fostering economic development and cooperation in indigenous communities will further assist in this regard.

It is through these programs, and a raft of other initiatives, that the Australian Government works with indigenous people to help ensure safer communities for all and stronger outcomes for Australia’s indigenous peoples.