

AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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## **Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – 9<sup>th</sup> Session 11-13 July 2016**

### **Australia Statement on Item 6: Human rights of indigenous peoples in relation to business enterprises**

Australia supports the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and is encouraging businesses to apply them in their operations, both in Australia and abroad. This includes businesses that have a relationship with indigenous peoples.

Australia appreciates EMRIP's studies and ongoing work to address and prevent abuses of the rights of indigenous peoples by businesses, including the recent study on decision-making and the extractive industries.

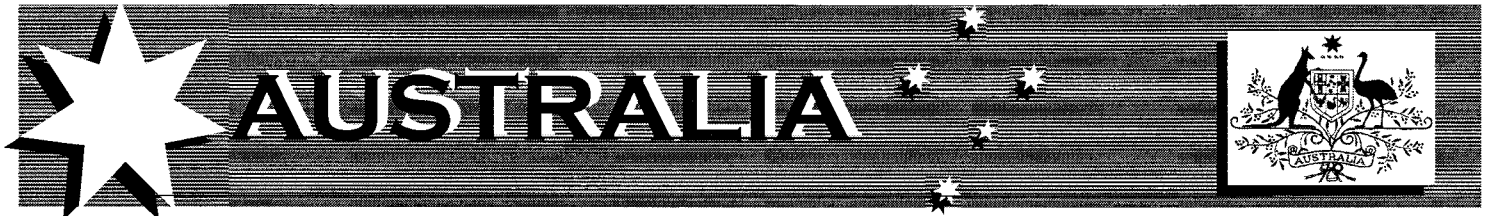
We urge EMRIP to also consider how to best support indigenous peoples to become empowered economic actors too. This work should take into account the situations faced by indigenous peoples in both developing and developed economies.

Australia believes that indigenous-owned enterprises provides a vehicle for indigenous peoples to self-determine and advance their own economic, social, cultural, civil and political human rights outcomes.

Governments play a role in removing barriers and facilitating an enabling environment for indigenous businesses to prosper according to their own priorities, based on their indigenous values and their ways of working. In saying this, Indigenous peoples themselves are responsible for driving economic development, and should be empowered to do so by Governments and other actors.

Through our Indigenous Economic Development policy, Australia is supporting the development and strengthening of the Indigenous business sector, as well as maximising opportunities for Indigenous businesses to win government contracts, and for Indigenous land owners to use their land assets to support their economic independence.

Australia is interested in learning how other governments are catalysing the growth of their indigenous business sector, and how indigenous-owned businesses in other countries are empowering their communities.



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Thanks to our attendance at the World Indigenous Business Forum, Australia is aware of the growing role of indigenous business sectors in other countries – such as the 37,000 Aboriginal businesses in Canada, or the role of Maori business within New Zealand’s forestry and fishing industry.

We were pleased to be able to discuss these issues in depth yesterday at our side event on enhancing economic empowerment for indigenous peoples.

Member States, indigenous businesses, the private sector and peak economic bodies such as the World Indigenous Business Forum, the OECD and the World Bank for example, all play necessary and complementary roles in advancing economic empowerment for indigenous peoples in both developed and developing countries.

We recommend that EMRIP should work with these stakeholders to provide practical, operational-level guidance about realising Article 21 in the Declaration, examining how the economic system and its actors operate in order to identify opportunities and barriers to indigenous-driven and indigenous-owned economic empowerment.