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**Joint Statement by the
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, the
Australian Human Rights Commission, Mick Gooda
and
Human Rights Commissioner, New Zealand Human Rights Commission, Karen
Johansen
to the
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
9-13 July 2012, Geneva**

Item 3: World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

Thank you Mister Chair

Firstly we would like to acknowledge and congratulate Chief Wilton Littlechild on his election as the chairperson to the fifth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We make the following statement in our capacity as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI's) established in accordance with the 'Paris Principles Relating to the Status and Functions of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights', in adherence to the General Assembly Resolution 48/134 of 1993.

We note the General Assembly decision through its resolution A/RES/65/198 of 21 December 2010, to organize a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly in 2014, to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

We also note the adoption of the Human Rights Council resolution at its twentieth session regarding national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. This resolution reaffirms the important role that NHRI's play in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, in strengthening participation and the rule of law, and in developing and enhancing public awareness of those rights and fundamental freedoms. In particular the resolution highlights the contribution that NHRI's make in advocating for the independent participation in all relevant United Nations Mechanisms in accordance with their respective mandates.

The salient role NHRI's can play in promoting and protecting the rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous peoples has also been noted by several international bodies and mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), and the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP).

Mr Chair

As many are aware, the Australian Human Rights Commission has a dedicated Commissioner whose mandate is to monitor and report on the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, has

described the Office of the Social Justice Commissioner within the AHRC as an 'exceptional model for advancing the recognition and protection of rights of indigenous peoples'.

The New Zealand Human Rights Commission also has a specific mandate to promote understanding and advocate for the human rights dimensions of the Treaty of Waitangi which is the domestic expression of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in New Zealand.

NHRI's play a critical role in facilitating constructive dialogue between national governments and Indigenous communities, and this role is particularly important in the work currently being done to organise regional preparatory meetings leading into both the Alto meeting, and in supporting participation in the World Conference in 2014.

To date, our Commissions have not been directly involved in discussions concerning the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. As such, in developing the modalities for the World Conference, including the participation of indigenous peoples in the Conference, we recommend that the Global Co-ordinating Group consider the role that NHRI's can play in supporting Indigenous peoples participation in the Conference and work with the International Coordinating Council in determining what that role will be.

Recommendation:

The Australian and New Zealand Human Rights Commissions recommend that the Human Rights Council and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples encourage the Global Co-ordinating Group in their development of the modalities for the World Conference, consider the role that NHRI's can play in supporting Indigenous peoples participation in both the preparatory meeting and the Conference and work with the International Coordinating Council in determining what that role will be.