

EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (EMRIP)

11th SESSION, 11th July 2018

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*Agenda item no. 7 Panel discussion: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: good practices and lessons learned. Dialogue with **Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Chair of the UNPFII, the Board of Trustees of the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, and members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Committee.***

Jack Collard – University of Western Australia

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

My name is Jack Collard and I am an Aboriginal Australian student from Whadjuk and Ballardong country of the Nyoongar nation in the South-West of Australia.

Today, I would like to direct my statement in particular to Madam Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, however I would of course welcome comments by all panel members and those here today.

In March and April last year, Madam Special Rapporteur, you made a visit to Australia to examine the human rights situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In your report, you noted that Australia, like many countries, has a long way to go before the rights of Indigenous peoples are fully realized. You stated and I quote:

“The non-recognition of the socioeconomic exclusion

and the impact of intergenerational trauma on indigenous peoples continue to undermine

reconciliation efforts. In order to truly recognize the situation of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islanders today, there needs to be much greater public awareness of their perspectives

on history and the consequences of past policies and legislation, including the long-term

damage and rupture of social bonds caused by the forced removal and institutionalization of their children”.

In May last year 200 representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities met and came to a national consensus on the constitutional reform they wanted.

Named the Uluru Statement from the Heart – its realisation would go a long way towards creating greater public awareness of their perspectives on history and the consequences of past policies and legislation – as called for by the Special Rapporteur.

The Uluru Statement calls for a constitutionally enshrined voice to parliament, treaty and a truth commission or as the representatives decided to call it, a Makaratta commission.

Makaratta is a word from the Yolngu people of north-eastern Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. It means coming together after a struggle and hence it is befitting for this commission. In order for there to be greater public awareness of our dark history and as a result to decrease the prevalence of racism in Australia, there needs to be an effective Makaratta commission. Unfortunately, the Uluru Statement from the Heart was rejected immediately by the Federal Government and there has been scant media coverage since.

I believe good practice of UNDRIP would be having the experts work closely with Australia to effectively implement the Makaratta commission. As was seen in Finland, political interest in the UNDRIP increased as a result of the experts visit. However, due to Aboriginal people in Australia only representing for 3% of the population, Aboriginal affairs are not the at the forefront of most political discussion. This is why I believe a visit would change the course of future political discourse about my people dramatically in the future.

Thank you madam chair.