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Clustered Dialogue with Special Rapporteur and Expert Mechanism on the rights of Indigenous peoples

Statement by Australia, 18 September 2012

Australia acknowledges the important work of the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular recent work on extractive industries, violence against women and the role of languages and culture.

We were pleased that, in August of this year, the Special Rapporteur visited Australia to undertake consultations with regard to extractive industries and Indigenous peoples. We also note the Expert Mechanism's follow-up report on Indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making, with a focus on extractive industries.

As an important player in the extractive industry context, Australia recognises that all stakeholders need to work together to ensure that benefits from these industries operating within the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples can flow to the people who need them most.

Australia would be interested to hear views on how policy makers can overcome the challenges associated with conflicting views within Indigenous communities in relation to extractive industries.

We also agree with the Expert Mechanism's focus on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples.

Australia recognises the importance of languages and culture to identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the fundamental role that languages and culture play in Indigenous health and wellbeing.

The Australian Government is adopting a range of measures to support Indigenous languages and cultures, including through a National Indigenous Languages Policy and the provision of \$10 million annually to support the maintenance, revival, and development of Indigenous languages.

And finally Madame Chair, in keeping with the focus of the Special Rapporteur's report, I wish to take this opportunity to re-emphasise that Australia has a zero tolerance policy in relation to violence against women and is committed to reducing all violence in the Australian community. Sadly in Australia Indigenous women are 35 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be hospitalised as a result of family violence. That's why one of the national outcomes of Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-12 focuses on strengthening Indigenous communities, including by encouraging Indigenous women to have a stronger voice as community leaders and by supporting Indigenous men to reject violence.

Australia would be interested to hear about holistic approaches to reduce violence against women which have been developed drawing on the Special Rapporteur's global consultations with Indigenous peoples.