



AUSTRALIA

**UNITED NATIONS
WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
14TH SESSION
29 JULY TO 2 AUGUST 1996**

**STATEMENT BY MS ROBYN FORESTER
ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION**

**ITEM 6: CONSIDERATION OF A PERMANENT FORUM FOR
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

GENEVA

2 AUGUST 1996

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chairperson

Australia supports the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system.

The question of how to give indigenous peoples an effective voice in the United Nations system is a very important issue. We believe that any permanent forum should be linked to the Economic and Social Council at a suitably high level. It would be desirable for any new body to have a mandate that embraces the full range of issues of concern to indigenous peoples. That is, the mandate should extend beyond a narrow human rights focus to include economic, social and development issues. That mandate should also include co-ordination of all United Nations activities relevant to the concerns of indigenous peoples.

Further consideration needs to be given to the status, composition and mandate of the forum. Indigenous peoples will need time and opportunities to develop their views so that consensus can be reached in consultations with governments, and with the advice of the United Nations secretariat.

Madame Chairperson

The openness and accessibility which is characteristic of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations should not be lost in any permanent forum. It will be necessary for indigenous peoples to agree on the method of participation of indigenous representatives to the forum to ensure that the views of indigenous peoples throughout the world are fairly and effectively represented.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson