

Human Rights Council – 38th Session

Annual Full Day Discussion on the Human Rights of Women
Panel 2 - 22 June 2018

Joint Statement on advancing women's rights in the Pacific
Delivery by: Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls

I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of Australia and other nations in the Pacific including Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

We are working to support women's advancement and we applaud the valuable contributions of women in positions of leadership. In parts of the Pacific, however, women's participation in public life remains low. More work is needed to break down barriers to women's engagement in public discourse.

Information and communication technologies, or ICTs, can be powerful in providing women with access to information and services. This is particularly relevant for countries of the Pacific, where many women live in rural and remote communities.

ICTs can enable women's participation in public life, including access to economic opportunities through initiatives like the Pacific Women in Business website, an online resource to support women entrepreneurs. However, we must ensure that ICT does not further exacerbate inequalities and exclusion. We countries of the Pacific are working to improve women's economic empowerment in both the formal and informal sectors.

Women's physical, mental and emotional health enables their active participation in economic activity and community life. We recognise the right of women and girls to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Digital technologies can offer the access to information and education required to exercise this right. The Pacific-wide Tupaia program is using ICT to map health and clinic data that is increasing medicine availability and preventing wasted trips to closed or clinics without supplies.

We would welcome the panel's views on how to use ICT to end discrimination against women and provide access to information and services so that they are not further left behind.

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