

## Human Rights Council – 38th Session

### Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women

#### Panel 1: The impact of violence against women human rights defenders and women's organizations in digital spaces

Thursday 21 June

#### Australian Statement

Australia is committed to eliminating violence against women in all its forms, including that which occurs in digital spaces.

We strongly support women human rights defenders who consistently engage in human rights advocacy despite the deeply rooted stereotypes, and systemic power imbalances, that make them more vulnerable to reprisals.

The use of digital technologies and social media to target and harass women human rights defenders is a global phenomenon from which no country is immune.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mr Michel Forst, following a country visit to Australia in October 2016, drew specific attention to the online abuse and harassment faced by women human rights defenders.

He noted that in Australia the worst digital abuse appears to be reserved for women with high visibility, who speak out or those deemed to be feminist. He expressed concern that remedies have lagged behind the abuse and the process of triggering follow up by police is often ineffectual.

We take this very seriously. Australia has implemented a number of mechanisms to counter the use of technology to control, coerce and harass women. These include establishing the e-Safety Commissioner, whose role is to promote online safety, identify and remove illegal content and provide complaints mechanisms for people affected by online abuse.

We would welcome the panel's views on best practices for reducing incidences of online violence against women human rights defenders and for holding perpetrators to account.

238 Words