

Elimination of Discrimination against Women (L1)

General Comment: Permanent Representative to the UN, Sally Mansfield

Australia thanks Mexico and Colombia for presenting their annual resolution on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. We are pleased to have co-sponsored once again. We consider the theme for HRC38, “obstacles to women’s economic empowerment with a focus on sexual harassment”, is particularly timely.

Australia is deeply concerned about all forms of sexual harassment against women and girls. Sexual harassment is a human rights violation – it impacts the lives of women and girls in many contexts including in the home, school playgrounds, public transport, online spaces and the workplace.

We know that women’s economic empowerment helps to drive growth at a national level and reduce poverty within communities and households. Societies that make better use of the skills, talents and time of all their members will more likely prosper. However sexual harassment is a barrier to women’s economic empowerment. It undermines women’s equal participation in organisations or businesses. It reduces the quality of women’s working life and imposes costs to organisations. No country is immune from this problem.

Across the globe, there are many legislative and regulatory provisions that discriminate against women’s economic empowerment. For example: discriminatory limits on women’s access to inheritance, financial services and credit; failure to register female births; and discriminatory limits on women’s citizenship rights Australia is deeply concerned about the human rights impacts of these persistent discriminatory legal and policy barriers. These barriers prevent women’s full enjoyment of their human rights. These barriers impede economic development and growth.

This resolution has succeeded in recognising positive steps that the global community can play to enhance women’s economic empowerment. We are pleased to be able to support a resolution that acknowledges the importance of equal pay between men and women, and the importance of mainstreaming gender equality in planning and policy development.

We strongly support this resolution and urge all other Council members to do the same.