

Australian Statement Panel COVID-19 and the Rights of Women and Girls

13 July 2020

Australian Statement

Delivered by Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Women, Minister for Foreign Affairs

We have long known that disease outbreaks affect women and men differently – that pandemics exacerbate disadvantages for women and girls. COVID19 is no exception.

As the world makes its way out of this crisis, we must address the issue of gender inequality. We must do so both because it is the right thing to do – and because we need everybody's capabilities if we are to recover as strongly as possible from this crisis.

Women are agents of change in our societies and economies and, as such, need to participate in decision-making as equal partners.

During a crisis such as the one we face now, women and girls are also more likely to experience sexual and gender-based violence: a consequence of enduring gender inequality.

Australia is resolute in our commitment to eliminate this scourge, domestically and internationally.

Under the Australian Government's development response to COVID-19, Partnerships for Recovery, we have provided additional international support for women's shelters to continue their vital work.

Here in Australia, we have boosted family and domestic violence support, including funding for states and territories to strengthen critical service delivery.

At the community level, women's organisations provide vital health information and services for women who are experiencing, or are at risk of violence.

Women and girls need our support at this time.

For societies to be secure, stable and prosperous, we must address gender inequality.

It is a human right, and COVID-19 serves as a reminder that we must redouble our efforts to address it. Thank you.

250 words