



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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UNGA Third Committee

Item 29: General Discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples Statement delivered on 12 October 2018

Chair,

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for her report to the General Assembly this year. We note the report's focus on Indigenous peoples' governance structures and how these can give effect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Australia strongly supports the overarching theme of the 2030 Agenda of 'leaving no one behind'. Inclusiveness speaks to the notion of empowerment and the principle of non-discrimination.

We recognise the pivotal role Indigenous women play in empowering communities to achieve this ambitious agenda and overcome disadvantage.

Like many other countries, Australia's Indigenous women and girls often experience different life pathways to non-Indigenous women, such as taking on caring responsibilities at a younger age, resulting in lower rates of education and participation in employment over the course of their lives.

Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Ms June Oscar, has been invited by the Australian Government to lead a nationwide conversation in which Indigenous women and girls talk about their strengths, challenges and aspirations for change. The *Women's Voices* project offers significant opportunity to reframe the Government's current approach to empowering Indigenous women and girls.

Australia is proud of our rich history and diversity and that we are home to the world's oldest continuing culture- that of our First Australians.

Cultural heritage and knowledge is passed on, generation to generation, by language, culture and artistic expression. Language and art contain complex reflections of a person's values, identity, pride, self-worth and connection with others and their environment.

In this regard, Australia welcomes the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages. Our membership on the UNESCO Steering Committee for this International Year demonstrates our support and commitment to revive, maintain, celebrate and promote Indigenous languages.

In Australia, the Government embraces working with Indigenous leaders and communities in a way which supports Indigenous ownership, enables true partnerships with Government, and recognises the diversity of cultures and circumstances of Indigenous Australians. The refresh of Australia's national agenda to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, *Closing the Gap*, is centred on building partnerships using a strengths based approach. We are also supporting the Indigenous designed and led *Empowered Communities* initiative, which recognises the capacity of Indigenous leaders and governance structures within communities.

Like Australia's *Closing the Gap* agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Goals are a long-term, ambitious framework which requires sustained efforts from all levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors, communities and individuals.

Australia welcomes further discussion and ideas on the alignment between empowerment of indigenous peoples and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Words: 426