



AUSTRALIA



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**UNGA Third Committee
Item 29: the Advancement of Women
Statement delivered on 5 October 2018**

Mr Chair

Gender equality is a core Australian value, and the full and equal realisation of women's and girls' human rights is a top priority.

Advancing and achieving gender equality promotes growth, development and stability. Women's economic empowerment helps to drive growth and reduces poverty within communities, households and nations.

The UN Secretary General's commitment to gender parity presents a unique opportunity to advance gender equality within the UN and to model best behaviour. We are pleased with progress made to date.

But it cannot succeed in isolation. We urge all UN Agencies to deliver on their commitment to the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

We are deeply concerned at recent revelations of sexual exploitation and abuse, and harassment within the UN system. These practices are intolerable and we condemn them unreservedly. Sexual harassment and abuse is a human rights violation.

We commend the UNSG's unequivocal zero tolerance position and the actions taken so far across the UN system. We urge continued leadership in reforming the culture that drives these unacceptable behaviours.

Australia takes this issue very seriously, reviewing our own policies and practices as well as working with partners to improve global standards and reporting.

Mr Chair

As nations we must persevere in our efforts to remove all forms of discrimination against women and girls and to tackle the persistent barriers to gender equality.

And without addressing barriers to gender equality, we cannot achieve what we all committed to in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Women and girls who feel, and are, safe are more empowered and more likely to fully participate in their communities and economies.

Eliminating violence against women and girls requires co-ordinated multi-sectoral approaches combined with attitudinal changes across all aspects of society - family, work and politics.

This includes ensuring all nations remain fully committed to eliminating profoundly harmful practices such as early, child and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Australia's national efforts are channelled through our *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. After extensive consultation, the Council of Australian Governments recently held the National Summit on Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children, focussing on the themes of prevention, response and recovery. This will inform Australia's Fourth National Action Plan.

Our domestic actions to ending violence against women are matched by our international efforts including our continued support to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

Women's control over their bodies is a prerequisite to full equality. Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights is key to the advancement of women. Australia has a longstanding commitment to the promotion and delivery of sexual and reproductive health and rights, which are critical to empowering women, improving gender equality, and reducing maternal and child mortality.

Mr Chair

None of our societies can reach its full potential if it leaves behind half of its population.

As we approach the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, we can take some satisfaction in what our efforts have achieved. But we cannot be complacent; there remains much work to be done.

That is the obligation on each and every country represented here today. Australia remains committed and determined to work domestically and internationally with all who are genuinely committed to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

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