

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2017

Australian Statement

High-level event for the 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples

**Delivered by Ms Rachel O'Connor, Assistant Secretary, Strategy Policy and Coordination Branch,
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Thank you Mr President.

Australia is proud to join indigenous peoples and Member States in celebrating the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Our shared support for the Declaration includes an important commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples around the world.

In the ten years of the Declaration, Australia, like all countries, has experienced many changes, challenges and successes.

Since its adoption Australia has made important steps to honour the principles of the Declaration. These include efforts to repatriate ancestral remains, supporting language and culture maintenance and transmission and continuing to recognise the ongoing connection for Indigenous peoples and land, and respect this. We are also making steps towards constitutional recognition, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Australian Prime Minister made a commitment to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We understand that it is imperative for governments and first peoples to work together in line with the Declaration. The priority for the Australian Government is to develop a closer partnership with our first peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, so that Indigenous people are at the centre of developing solutions. We believe achieving this would demonstrate a great step towards truly effecting the Declaration.

In Australia a Regional Network has been established to facilitate collaborative relationships between government and Indigenous organisations, and to support community led solutions.

The Network has broad on the ground presence and deep understanding of local issues. Well established relationships with communities through the Network enable the Australian Government to work with Indigenous peoples to develop place-based solutions.

As part of the Australia's commitment to enable Indigenous leaders to develop local solutions, we have a responsibility to measure the success or otherwise of our policies and programs, and adjust where needed. And sharing this knowledge and evidence with communities enables local decision-making.

As an example, we are supporting the Empowered Communities initiative, developed by Indigenous leaders, which aims to strengthen local leadership and governance to build prosperous and safe communities.

We partner with Indigenous leaders, commonwealth, state, territory and local governments, the corporate sector and non-government organisations to facilitate this work.

In Australia the Federal Government also engages at a national level with Indigenous Australian leaders such as the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and a coalition of peak bodies known as the Redfern Alliance.

There is engagement at the ministerial level to support delivery of a series of workshops with the Redfern Alliance to discuss mutual priorities and identify solutions.

Australia also takes this opportunity to recognise the important role that the Declaration has played in guiding the work of the United Nations towards realising the rights of indigenous peoples in many contexts, including through implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Moving forward, we hope the United Nations can take another major step on this 10th anniversary towards enabling the participation of Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions in United Nation meetings on issues affecting them.

We are interested in learning from other Member States, and from indigenous peoples, lessons they have learnt in implementing the Declaration, both positive and negative. This sharing of stories and best practice will help us all support each other on the journey to achieving our goals.