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Implementing the 2030 Agenda to Accelerate Realisation of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls

**Statement by H.E. Gillian Bird
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

(As delivered)

*Panel Session I: 'Institutional arrangements for gender-responsive
implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'*

Thank you Ambassador Patriota.

Australia was a strong advocate for the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And we are of course delighted with its inclusion. But equally important will be ensuring that the gender lens is

applied across the sustainable development agenda. The cross-cutting inclusion of gender equality across the 2030 Agenda is therefore a ground breaking achievement.

We believe that the commitments to gender equality in the 2030 Agenda have the potential to be truly transformative. And that achieving gender equality will accelerate the realisation of goals and targets across the 2030 Agenda.

We are continuing to consider the domestic implications of the 2030 Agenda, but many of the implications are becoming clear.

Take for example the sustainable development target of eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls, which is a prerequisite to full and equal participation in all aspects of social, political and economic life. Australia is regrettably confronting record levels of violence against women. Last year, more than 60 women in Australia lost their lives to violence perpetrated against them by a male, usually one known to them. In response, we have committed AUD100 million to support primary prevention and essential services for women who experience violence.

We are also working to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation with new financial literacy projects for women and improved assistance to access childcare.

In order to strengthen the provision of gender analysis, advice and mainstreaming across the Australian Government, the Australian Minister for Women works with other Government Ministers to ensure that women's issues and gender equality are taken into consideration in policy and program development and implementation.

The Australian Office for Women sits within the Prime Minister's Department, giving it considerable authority. The Office works across Australian Government agencies, to deliver stronger economic and social outcomes for women.

In addition to our domestic measures, gender equality is a central priority of Australia's foreign policy, and a central pillar of our campaign to be elected to the Human Rights Council for 2018 – 2020.

We have done this because the full and equal realisation of the human rights of women and girls is vital to achieving inclusive and sustainable development

We are working with countries in our region to support women's leadership, voices and decision-making towards ending violence against women and ensuring women's equal access to economic opportunities.

We are, for example, partnering with our Pacific neighbours to tackle the root causes and underlying attitudes that condone and perpetuate violence against women. Through a 'Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development' program, Australia is working with Pacific Leaders to support front-line and emergency services, as well as improve access to justice and early intervention programs focussed on preventing violence. These programs have helped almost 13,000 women and girls access crisis support services.

Australia is also supporting Pacific governments to implement legislation to criminalise domestic violence, giving effect to the sustainable development goals.

We are proud to support countries in South East Asia in removing the barriers to women's economic empowerment and to help achieve targets for decent work and equal opportunities for leadership in economic life.

Our new flagship program 'Investing in Women' is a AUD46 million investment (over the next four years). It will support businesses in the region to achieve gender equity in their workplaces and encourage the removal of policy and regulatory barriers to women's economic empowerment and work. It will also work with impact investors to increase the flow of capital to expand women-led small-to-medium enterprises, the sector that we know is an engine of economic growth in East Asia region.

Australia also supports a strong civil society presence in decision-making and at international forums. Women's organisations have a long history in progressing gender equality and ensuring women's and girls' human rights are central to international policy.

We encourage all member states to work closely with their national human rights institutions, as partners to promote and protect human rights for

women and girls, and to progress the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the 2030 Agenda.

In conclusion, it is worth reminding ourselves that the Beijing Platform for Action remains a blueprint of enduring relevance in pursuit of gender equality.

Delivering on the ambition of the 2030 Agenda requires that we accelerate progress to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be a game-changer for women's and girls' empowerment and rights if we, the Member States, can achieve its ambition.

Thank you.