



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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41st plenary meeting of the General Assembly Report of the Human Rights Council

**Statement delivered by Ambassador Caitlin Wilson, Deputy Permanent
Representative of the Australian Mission to the UN, on 4 November 2016**

Mr Chair

Australia supported the establishment of the Human Rights Council in 2006, and ten years on, we remain convinced that the Council and its mechanisms continue to play a fundamental role in upholding universal human rights.

Today we have the opportunity to consider the Council's achievements over the past year, of which there have been many. I take this opportunity to briefly highlight a couple.

We are pleased to note that the Council adopted its first resolution on violence against women with a strong focus on indigenous women. We welcome the Council's increased focus on improving the human rights outcomes for indigenous peoples generally, including through strengthening the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Australia was also pleased to present the resolution on national institutions for the protection and promotion of

human rights at the Council's September session, which was adopted by consensus.

Last but not least, we strongly support the Council's resolution on protection against violence and discrimination on the basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, including the appointment of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. This represents a significant step towards recognising the need to protect the LGBTI community from discrimination and violence. I would stress that this is not an attempt to elevate this above other human rights issues, but simply to ensure similar recognition of the importance of LGBTI discrimination and violence as one of several serious international human rights issues.

In this regard, we have been extremely disappointed to hear some States challenging the appointment of the Independent Expert by the Human Rights Council, including this morning. We reiterate our position that it is up to the plenary of the General Assembly - and not its Third Committee - to consider the report of the Council in accordance with General Assembly resolution 65/281; and we take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the independence and mandate of the Council.

We call on countries to support the appointment of the Expert and to work cooperatively with him as he exercises his mandate. Australia has a long history of engaging cooperatively with human rights mechanisms and processes, including through our standing invitation to special procedure mandate holders,

and we look forward to welcoming a number of Special Rapporteurs over coming months.

Mr Chair

Australia will continue to be a champion for the promotion and protection of human rights. For the first time, we have put forward our candidature for Human Rights Council for 2018-20.

We believe that all states should have an equal voice in the Council, regardless of size. We have been a strong supporter of the active participation of small island states and least developed countries in the Council – just as we are here in New York and in the UN system more broadly. We were pleased to support participation of SIDS/LDCs at the tenth anniversary session of the Council in Geneva – the first Council meeting with universal participation.

Given the opportunity to serve on the Council, Australia would focus on five key areas: advancing the rights of women and girls, promoting good governance and strong democratic institutions everywhere, promoting and protecting freedom of expression, advancing the rights of indigenous peoples, and promoting strong national human rights institutions.

Mr Chair

Regardless of whether Australia is on the Council not, we will remain strongly committed to engaging actively and constructively to improve the human rights situation for all people around the world.

Thank you.