UN Women Executive Board
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Statement under Agenda item 1

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of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Mr President

Let me start by congratulating Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka on her first anniversary with UN Women, and thanking her for her continued commitment to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment.
And I wish to restate Australia’s appreciation of John Hendra’s contribution to UN Women and to gender equality.

Australia was delighted to welcome Ms Mlambo-Ngcuka to Australia in late August. Her visit clearly demonstrated the strong alignment between the priorities of Australia and UN Women, particularly in enhancing women’s voice in decision-making, leadership, and peacebuilding, and women’s economic empowerment, and ending violence against women; as well as ensuring that gender equality and women’s empowerment is a central focus of the Post-2015 Development Framework.

The Australian Government is strongly committed to being at the forefront of efforts to empower women and girls and promote gender equality, through its foreign policy and overseas aid program, with a particular focus on the Indo-Pacific region.

The Australian Government has set a target requiring that at least 80 per cent of investments, regardless of their objectives, to effectively address gender issues in their implementation. To meet this target, the gender impacts of all investments will be assessed annually and at least 80 per cent of these investments will need to demonstrate real progress in addressing gender issues. This might mean ensuring women participate in decision-making throughout implementation, identifying and pursuing opportunities for
women to be employed through an investment, or addressing particular challenges to implementation such as violence or social norms that exclude women. In order to achieve this target, we need to improve sex-disaggregated data collection to better understand the impacts of an investment on women and girls.

Mr President
The 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action provides an opportunity to highlight the long-standing support for a progressive approach to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We commend UN Women on the Australian launch of its Beijing+20 Campaign, launched by Madame Mlambo-Ngcuka and Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women.

We encourage UN Women to continue to to be on hand to help Member States achieve strong outcomes both in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Post-2015 Development Framework.

Australia welcomes the announcement of joint work by UN Women and OCHA on humanitarian crises in the Asia-Pacific. We also congratulate UN Women on its efforts to strengthen its presence in the Pacific Island region, including the appointment of a Deputy Representative to the Multi-Country Office in Fiji.

The Pacific Island region is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and more needs to be done to support Pacific nations to plan for and respond to the different needs of women, men, boys and girls in disaster situations. This needs to be supported by adequate monitoring and data collection to improve responses.

As part of UN Women’s Humanitarian Strategy, Australia encourages UN Women through its multi-country and regional offices to ensure that gender equality is embedded in humanitarian responses and disaster risk reduction efforts in the Pacific Island region so that the different needs of women, men, girls and boys are effectively addressed.

Mr President
Australia recognises the importance of aligning our international and domestic objectives to maximise our efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women globally.

The G20’s focus on boosting global growth and strengthening economic resilience can also contribute to supporting women’s economic empowerment and help to reduce gender inequality. This year, as Chair of the G20, Australia is working with G20 members to consider specific actions across the agenda that will benefit women, including by increasing women’s labour force participation and improving their access to financial services.

Mr President, Australia congratulates UN Women on its efforts, and looks forward to continuing to work closely and collaboratively with UN Women to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women globally.