UN Women Executive Board
Annual Session 2014

Statement by Mr Peter Versegii, Minister Counsellor,
Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Mr. President

Let me start by thanking the Executive Director of UN Women and her team for her Report and for the Entity’s continued focus on achieving results to advance gender equality. Madam Phumzile, it is less than a year since your appointment and yet UN Women has maintained, and even increased its momentum – this is a reflection on your leadership, for which we thank you.

Australia views gender equality and women’s empowerment as essential pre-conditions for economic growth and sustainable human development, and as critical outcomes in their own right. Gender equality and empowering women and girls are priorities in our foreign policy and for our overseas aid program.

Post 2015 Development Agenda

Australia is committed to designing a post-2015 development agenda in which gender equality and the promotion and protection of women and girls’ human rights are a priority, both as a standalone goal and mainstreamed across other goals.

It is encouraging that a standalone goal on gender equality is one of the early areas of consensus in the Open Working Group, and we commend UN Women’s effectiveness in helping secure this consensus.
We particularly commend UN Women’s successful coordination of the 58th Commission on the Status of Women. The outcome of CSW, and its clear call for a standalone gender equality goal, is a credit to the leadership of UN Women.

Australia encourages UN Women to continue to provide technical support to the post-2015 process to ensure that targets, and ultimately indicators, both under the gender goal, and those critical to mainstreaming gender, are appropriately crafted to drive transformative change for women and girls.

Pacific

We commend the work of UN Women in our region – particularly in the Pacific. The Pacific Island region struggles with high rates of violence against women and a low rate of female political representation – factors which combine to limit the potential of Pacific women, and of the region.

We consider UN Women an important partner in the Pacific, and value its efforts to support Pacific women’s economic and political participation and protect women from violence. The Markets for Change project in the Pacific is one example where we are pleased to partner with UN Women, drawing on the lessons UN Women has learned on the ground in improving market access and safety for women.

We encourage UN Women to continue to strengthen its presence at the country and regional level. We also encourage UN Women to ensure adequate resourcing for the Pacific and encourage increased inclusion of the Pacific in reporting mechanisms.

Women, Peace and Security

Australia congratulates UN Women on the gains made over the past twelve months in the women, peace and security agenda. This is one of our core priorities during our term on the Security Council. We are particularly encouraged that there is an increased focus on, and funding for women, peace and security across the UN system.

We also commend UN Women for its efforts in supporting the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty – the first multilateral treaty that expressly recognises that the inadequately regulated or illicit trade in arms can lead to gender-based violence or violence against women and children. Australia was proud to be involved in the development of this important Treaty.
We acknowledge the increasing role of UN Women in women, peace and security. It is a sad reality that this role will have to expand further—we support UN Women’s efforts to increase its capacity to deliver on this agenda and encourage reporting on the progress of these efforts.

Strong Coalitions of Support

Australia congratulates UN Women on its efforts to build strong coalitions of support amongst a broad range of stakeholders, and we appreciate the priority placed on resource mobilization.

We commend UN Women on the establishment of the Private Sector Leadership Advisory Council which provides the Entity with an opportunity to build innovate public-private partnerships to further gender equality.

We encourage UN Women to continue to invest in and support National Committees. As independent, non-government organisations that support the mission of UN Women, National Committees have the potential to be a valuable resource in fundraising, developing links with the private sector and civil society, and dissenting information on the Entity’s work to a wide public audience Mr President, we note that the report against the strategic plan represents the completion of UN Women’s first strategic plan, and we congratulate UN Women on this milestone.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with UN Women over the next twelve months.

Thank you.