



# AUSTRALIA



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## Forty-seventh session of the UN Commission on Population and Development

### Australian National Statement

**H.E Ambassador Gary Quinlan  
Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations**

(Check against delivery)

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Thank you Chair.

Australia welcomes the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Beyond 2014 Global Review Report.

The review, undertaken at the request of member states, presents compelling evidence and analysis on our progress over the past twenty years and – even more essentially – of our failures.

The review, of course, confirms the obvious – that the work of the ICPD programme of action is far too far from done.

Madam Chair,

This is the first time in four years in New York as Australia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations that I have addressed this Commission.

I have just left a meeting of the Security Council, which is still in progress, about a serious conflict in Africa – in South Sudan – to come to the Commission to express my bitter disappointment that, after two decades, we continue to:

- **struggle** to deliver fundamental human rights for women and girls;
- **struggle** to protect women and girls from discrimination and violence in all its forms;
- **struggle** to empower women and girls to have control and autonomy over their own bodies and protect their sexual and reproductive rights; and
- **struggle** to prevent female genital mutilation.

Frankly, I am outraged that today these fundamental rights are being challenged – a far cry from the consensus we struck some twenty years ago.

This is unacceptable in the 21st Century.

We must recommit ourselves to implementing the Cairo Programme of Action.

We must particularly focus on the areas of action identified in the Beyond 2014 Review as pathways to fully implementing the Programme of Action. This will be critical to the post-2015 development agenda.

For a start, we know that one of the best ways to promote economic growth is to empower women.

It is vitally important that **all** women have access to education, health services, resources and finance and that all women are able to enjoy their human rights, so they can live long, healthy lives and unlock their potential, for themselves and their communities.

We must do better to empower women to take leadership positions, to be part of the decision-making at family, business, community and political levels.

We must end discrimination and violence against women and girls.

We must also end violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

We must do better on delivering sexual and reproductive health and rights:

- in Asia and the Pacific region alone, there are more than 132 million women with an unmet need for family planning;
- this unmet need is increasing in the Pacific and teenage fertility rates remain extremely high.

We can commit to addressing these challenges, as demonstrated by the strong and progressive outcome of the Asian and Pacific Population Conference held last September.

Australia - together with the overwhelming support of our own region - was pleased to support a declaration that upholds women's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Australia strongly supports the continued leadership of the Pacific island countries in advancing the ICPD agenda as reconfirmed in their statement to the Commission yesterday.

We cannot deliver on our commitments to empowering women or on our efforts to support development if we cannot guarantee these rights.

We need to ensure that reproductive health programs and comprehensive sexuality education are available to all, that they address the greater vulnerability of adolescents, and that they promote understanding of - and respect for - the rights of individuals.

We need health care and services that are accessible and respond to needs across the population, from adolescents to older people, and which are sensitive to those with disabilities and to other vulnerable groups.

We know that investments in our youth – in education, in services and information and, vitally, in jobs – help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and help young people become active participants in the community and economy.

Equally, we must address the needs of our aging populations, and ensure that our policies and programs support their particular needs and include them in decision-making processes.

Australia is firmly committed to finishing the job on the ICPD agenda.

To this end, Australia recently appointed Ms Natasha Stott Despoja – formerly the youngest ever leader of an Australian political party – as Ambassador for Women and

Girls. The Ambassador will promote the full and active participation of women, women's leadership and women's empowerment, including economic empowerment.

As I conclude, let us remember that eleven year old girl about which Dr Babatunde spoke so passionately in his opening remarks, and remember that we are dealing with the lives of individual people, who – like all of us - have value, worth and potential. These people are the human future.

Thank you.