



New South Wales
Aboriginal Land Council



Intervention by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (Consultative Status with ECOSOC)

Speaker: Councillor Anne Dennis

Item 10: Preparing for 20 Years of UNDRIP: Guiding questions for discussion

Thank you Madam Chair.

My name is Anne Dennis, I am a Councillor for the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and I am a proud Gamilaraay woman.

I speak on behalf of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council.

As we prepare to mark twenty years of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we therefore recommend:

1. that the twentieth anniversary in 2027 be used as a moment of accountability and renewed commitment to implementation, rather than commemoration alone;
2. that States develop national implementation plans for the Declaration in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and their representative institutions;
3. that the United Nations and Member States support an Indigenous-led global stocktake of progress and implementation gaps over the past twenty years;
4. that the Expert Mechanism prepare a twentieth anniversary report on the state of implementation of the Declaration and priorities for the next twenty years; and

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5. that States renew their commitment to incorporating the standards of the Declaration into domestic laws, policies and decision-making frameworks.

Madam Chair,

Over the past two decades, the Declaration has become the global minimum standard for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples.

However, twenty years on, the challenge is no longer one of endorsement. The challenge is implementation.

Australia voted against the adoption of the Declaration in 2007 and, although it subsequently endorsed it in 2009, its provisions have never been incorporated into domestic law. Instead, they remain largely guiding principles rather than enforceable standards.

In Australia, the implementation gap is also shaped by a lack of political will. Constitutional change in Australia is difficult and requires a double majority of voters nationally and across the States. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was offered as a generous invitation to the Australian people. Yet the 2023 referendum was defeated in an environment marked by misinformation, fear and political point-scoring. This demonstrates that implementation of Indigenous rights cannot rely on goodwill alone. It requires sustained political leadership, truth-telling and legal protection.

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This anniversary also comes at a time of increasing challenges to human rights, the rise of right-wing and populist movements, shrinking civic space and growing pressure on Indigenous lands, territories, resources and institutions. These developments remind us that the rights contained in the Declaration can never be taken for granted and that hard-won gains can be reversed.

The twentieth anniversary should not simply celebrate twenty years since the Declaration's adoption. It should challenge States to demonstrate what they have done to implement it.

The next twenty years cannot be another twenty years of aspiration.

They must be twenty years of implementation.

Thank you.

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