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UNGA THIRD COMMITTEE 25 October 2018

Item 74: Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Tegan Brink Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Thank you Mr Chairman and welcome to the Independent Expert, Mr Madrigal-Borloz. Like the many other delegations who have spoken this morning, we value enormously the work that you do.

Australia acknowledge that these discussions on “the human rights of LGBTI persons” are some of the most difficult in international human rights discourse today. However, we are committed to this issue because it goes to the heart of our shared belief in equal rights and protections for all.

The lived reality for many LGBTI persons is not one of equal rights and treatment. LGBTI individuals face consistently higher levels of violence globally.

We must not, in our work here in the United Nations, leave this situation unaddressed. We agreed with those who have made the connection to the 2030 agenda - we must not leave LGBTI people behind.

Let me make three brief comments on the report.

First, we welcome the report's acknowledgement that gender and sex are not rigid, immutable concepts, and that there is a diversity of gender identities and expressions globally.

Australia is proud to be home to the world's oldest continuous civilisation, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples among whom there is a long history of diverse gender identities.

Australia is also pleased to support the self-identification and empowerment of many native gender-diverse communities across the Pacific region.

Second, Australia very much agrees with the Independent Expert that how we speak about gender has far-reaching effects. We encourage positive narratives, which empower individuals and contributes to more inclusive and equitable societies.

Third, on the report's comments on Australia, we are proud of our legislative and policy settings to support equal rights for LGBTI persons.

We acknowledge that we have more to do and look forward to continuing to work with you in fulfilment of your mandate.