Report of the
Australian Government
Delegation to the
59th Session of the
United Nations
Commission on
the Status of Women
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It was my privilege to lead the Australian Government delegation to the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59) in March 2015.

This year’s session provided the important opportunity to reflect upon the progress made in the two decades since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing Declaration). I am proud of the targeted efforts made over the past 20 years by Australia, as well by the international community, toward advancing gender equality.

Of course, there is much more work to be done. On the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the landmark Beijing Declaration, true gender equality regrettably remains elusive. Violence against women and girls continues to indiscriminately affect every society. Fundamental human rights remain out of reach for millions of women across the globe. Ultimately, half the world’s population are still unable to reach their full potential.

Through my interactions with policy makers and civil society representatives at CSW59, it is clear that the international community broadly shares Australia’s commitment to fully realising the Beijing Declaration’s progressive vision.

CSW59 also reaffirmed the importance of the post-2015 development agenda to achieving gender equality. I took the opportunity to engage with global leaders to advocate for gender equality as a central pillar of the post-2015 development framework.

Beyond CSW59, Australia will continue to strive for gender equality through ongoing national, regional and international efforts. Domestically, the Government is determined to reduce violence against women and their children and improve women’s economic participation and empowerment. Within our region, we will seek to drive change through open dialogue and the provision of targeted development aid.

The challenge which lies before us on the road to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is substantial. Australia believes that a strong civil society presence at international forums such as CSW is vital, including to its decision-making, to ensure that gender equality and women’s advancement remain at the forefront of international policy discussions.

On behalf of the delegation, I would like to thank the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their assistance with preparations and advice for the delegation’s participation in CSW59. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, Ambassador Gillian Bird, and her staff for the support provided in New York.

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women
Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection
Head of Delegation
The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (the Commission) is the principal global policy making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women and girls. Every year, representatives of United Nations (UN) Member States gather at the UN Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment worldwide.

For further details see Annex A.

The main focus of the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59) was the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing Declaration), including discussions on current challenges that affect its implementation and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In the lead up to CSW59 the Commission undertook a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration, 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The review (Beijing +20) also included the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly, the first five-year assessment conducted after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, which highlighted further actions and initiatives.

CSW59 also addressed opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the post-2015 development agenda.

UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was created in July 2010, and became operational on 1 January 2011.

Beijing +20 Global Review

As part of the Beijing +20 Global Review, states were called upon to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of their progress towards implementing the Beijing Declaration as well as challenges encountered in achieving gender equality.

For further details on the Beijing Declaration and the review process see Annex B.

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, adopted unanimously by 189 countries, is an agenda for women’s empowerment and considered the key global policy document on gender equality. It sets strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern: Women and poverty; education and training of women; women and health; violence against women; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; women in power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights of women; women and media; women and the environment; and the girl-child.
Since the establishment of the Commission in 1946, Australia has formally participated in the annual session of the Commission through the work carried out by the Australian Government delegation. Australian Government delegations to the Commission have actively engaged in negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions (formal outcomes of the Commission) and resolutions, hosted and spoken at a range of events, and pursued Australia’s agenda in relation to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This engagement enables Australia to:

- provide a principled voice on human rights, particularly the rights of women;
- showcase Australia’s gender equality initiatives internationally;
- engage with civil society to ensure better outcomes for women in Australia and globally; and
- strengthen and build relationships with like-minded countries and near neighbours.

The Australian Government delegation to CSW59 was led by Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women. Minister Cash delivered Australia’s Country Statement, which outlined the Government’s unwavering commitment to promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. Minister Cash also met with leaders of key UN agencies and her counterparts from different countries to both consider the barriers to achieving gender equality, and discuss effective strategies to address these barriers. The Minister held 15 bilateral meetings and participated in 13 side events in addition to representing the Government at official CSW59 proceedings.
Australian Government Delegation to CSW59

- Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
  Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women
- Her Excellency, Gillian Bird PSM
  Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations
- Her Excellency Natasha Stott Despoja AM
  Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls
- Ms Elizabeth Broderick
  Sex Discrimination Commissioner
- Her Excellency, Ms Caitlin Wilson
  Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations
- Ms Nicole Masters
  Chief of Staff to Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women
- Ms Alison Larkins
  First Assistant Secretary
  Social Policy Division, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Ms Anastasia Carayanides
  Minister Counsellor
  Australian Mission to the United Nations
- Mr Peter Versegi
  Minister Counsellor
  Australian Mission to the United Nations
- Ms Amy Haddad
  Counsellor (Development)
  Australian Mission to the United Nations
- Ms Kate Wallace
  Senior Advisor,
  International Engagement and Immigration, Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Ms Penelope Morton
  First Secretary
  Australian Mission to the United Nations
- Ms Sian Philips
  Policy Officer
  Gender Equality Section, Human Rights and Gender Equality Branch, Multilateral Policy Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Ms Maria Osman
  Community Volunteer (Non-government delegate)
- Ms Kimberley Abbott
  Founder and CEO
  Roka (Non-government delegate)
Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, delivering Australia’s Country Statement at the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Her Excellency Natasha Stott Despoja, Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls; Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women; Her Excellency, Gillian Bird PSM, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Australian Mission to the United Nations (left to right).
Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, Her Excellency Natasha Stott Despoja, undertook an extensive programme of side events and bilateral meetings to promote the Australian Government’s gender equality priorities. Her focus included the post-2015 development agenda, addressing violence against women and ongoing efforts to promote the protection of women and girls in conflict settings and their participation in conflict prevention and resolution. The Ambassador used her meetings and participation in events to highlight Australia’s programmes on gender equality in the Indo-Pacific region; and showcase our work on compiling data on violence against women, providing better support services for victims, and advancing women’s leadership and economic empowerment.

Report by the Ambassador for Women and Girls, H.E Natasha Stott Despoja AM

CSW59 commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women and falling at the cusp of final negotiations for the post-2015 development agenda, was an especially significant gathering of government and civil society gender equality leaders. Australia’s support for CSW59 offered a milestone opportunity to review two decades of progress towards women’s empowerment and consideration of future commitments (succinctly captured in the new campaign announced by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, 50:50 by 2030). The anniversary format of the session (with a Political Declaration adopted at the beginning of the session), however, presented challenges to the full engagement of all participants in CSW59’s deliberations. Nevertheless, the Declaration made important commitments to the advancement of women’s political, economic and social empowerment.

Australia had a high profile at the Commission, underlining our reputation as an active participant over many years and under successive governments. Our involvement each year builds on this longstanding commitment and reflects a strong tradition of government-civil society partnership to promote gender equality. Once again, the presence of two non-government representatives on Australia’s delegation to CSW59, Maria Osman and Kimberley Abbott, expanded the quality and breadth of the delegation’s engagement across the CSW agenda. A strong team on the ground in Australia’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations meant that Australia’s negotiating priorities were successfully pursued in the lead up to CSW59 and a high level of support was provided to the delegation during the Session, enabling members to pursue extensive, well targeted programmes and to showcase Australia’s leadership to a large audience.

Gender equality is placed centrally in Australia’s foreign policy agenda and aid programme. The Commission is a key forum in which to pursue strong international commitment to these interests, to promote Australia’s initiatives and to build closer cooperation with our regional partners, especially in the Pacific. To this end, Australia engaged actively in a broad array of the hundreds of CSW59 side events, as host, sponsor and participant. The side events set the context for the broad discussions at CSW59.

Complementing the programmes of delegation leader, Minister Cash, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, and other delegation members, I played a formal role at six side events. These highlighted Australia’s domestic and international initiatives to promote gender equality, notably to end violence against women through primary prevention initiatives, innovative uses of technology, the work of OurWatch, Australia’s National Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children, and our contributions to research and evidence based approaches to addressing gender-based violence in the Pacific region.

Australia’s support for women’s economic empowerment and leadership, the women, peace and security agenda, and the promotion of the rights and interests of women with disabilities were also priority themes in my presentations.
Each year, Australia co-hosts a side event with its Pacific development partners and this is a vital element of our cooperation at the Commission to advance shared regional concerns.

This year, the event assessed progress towards achieving gender equality in the Pacific, a priority issue for Australia with our strong investment in the 10 year Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development initiative.

The opportunity to meet with a delegation of young World YWCA representatives from around the globe was a particular privilege and underlined the challenges we face in securing a future in which all women and girls are able to realise their potential. Bilateral meetings with heads of other delegations and representatives of UN agencies provided valuable opportunities to explain and encourage support for Australia’s concerns. I participated in 17 of these meetings to advance Australia’s priorities for the post-2015 development framework.

These leaders (women such as Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, Helen Clark, Administrator of the UN Development Programme and Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict) head global efforts to achieve gender equality. However, CSW is a salient reminder that the daily struggles and extraordinary commitment and perseverance of women and girls around the globe are the foundation for the work of the Commission and inspire its multilateral action.
Australia was also represented at CSW59 by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Elizabeth Broderick. The role of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner is established under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 to address sex discrimination and promote gender equality. Ms Broderick was appointed Sex Discrimination Commissioner in September 2007. This was for an initial five year term which has since been extended to September 2015.

In her role as Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Broderick has attended six CSW sessions. At CSW59, Ms Broderick undertook an independent programme of events which complemented the engagements of Minister Cash and the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, H.E Natasha Stott Despoja AM.

Report by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Elizabeth Broderick

As Australia’s Sex Discrimination Commissioner (SDC), I was privileged to be a member of the Australian Government delegation for the first week of CSW59. This was an historic CSW marking the passage of 20 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As my term as SDC ends in September this year, this will be the last CSW I attend as SDC. I felt humbled to be a part of such an historic moment in the history of women’s struggle for gender equality.

In advance of attending CSW59, I submitted four briefings (Role of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Independent Participation Status of National Human Rights Institutions, Australian Defence Force Reforms to Promote the Participation of Women, and Women’s Empowerment Principles) to Minister Cash and the Office for Women to inform the Australian Government’s position on key issues. I also provided comments on the draft Political Declaration negotiated prior to CSW59 and the Working Methods Resolution negotiated prior to and during CSW59.

The Australian Government delegation had a strong and positive presence at CSW59 organising high quality side events on key gender equality issues which profiled leading practices in Australia as well as key issues relevant to the international context. I welcomed the opportunity to speak at two events co-hosted by the Australian Government. I was also pleased to facilitate a Ministerial Roundtable focused on accountability for realising defacto equality for women, present at UN Women’s Intergenerational Dialogue, and co-chair the Women’s Empowerment Principles Leadership Group and Annual Event during CSW59.

The presence of Minister Cash and the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, H.E Natasha Stott Despoja, had a high impact in profiling Australia’s leading work on gender equality, most notably in addressing different forms of violence against women, addressing barriers to women’s workforce participation, engaging men and boys and women’s leadership.

Each year, Australian non-government organisations (NGO) actively engage in CSW sessions and make a profound contribution to promoting gender equality across the globe. This year was no exception with a strong contingent of committed and talented NGO representatives attending CSW59 and sharing their expertise in a range of events hosted by government and non-government organisations.

Australia’s Country Statement to CSW59, delivered by Minister Cash, was a strong statement of support for addressing gender equality and violence against women and on the promotion and protection of women and girl’s human rights in the context of the 20 year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the post-2015 development agenda.

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, H.E Natasha Stott Despoja and the Hon Louise Upston meeting with Pacific Island leaders.

Ms Cherelle Fruean, YWCA Samoa, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash and Ms Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, World YWCA General Secretary.
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The Australian Government also played a key role in negotiations on the Political Declaration and the Working Methods Resolution. The Political Declaration affirms the strong commitment by governments to accelerate efforts to realise gender equality for women and girls and recognises the importance of women’s human rights and gender equality issues in achieving poverty alleviation and development frameworks.

The Australian Government played an integral role in the negotiations around the Working Methods Resolution resulting in a strong reaffirmation of the Commission’s commitment to advancing women's human rights and gender equality and its ongoing commitment to engaging civil society actors in its proceedings. It was also pleasing to see the positive contribution of National Human Rights Institutions recognised.

I would like to thank the Australian Government for the opportunity to attend CSW59 as part of the Australian Government delegation. It was an honour to be part of such an effective delegation and to participate in such an historic event.

Australia included two non-government representatives on the Australian Government delegation to CSW59: Ms Maria Osman, who has extensive experience working in the areas of gender equality, human rights, anti-racism, humanitarian programmes and community development; and Ms Kimberley Abbott, founder and Chief Executive Officer of social enterprise Roka. The appointment of non-government representatives to the delegation reflects the Australian Government’s ongoing commitment to engage with civil society.

Non-government delegates are included on the delegation to provide advice to Government on matters relating to their particular areas of expertise, and to act as liaison points between government and civil society. The non-government delegates hosted briefings each evening to update Australian non-government representatives attending CSW59 of the government delegation’s activities. The non-government delegates were encouraged and supported to attend a range of events, build networks with Australian and international non-government organisations and make a positive contribution to discussions.
Report by Ms Maria Osman

CSW59 marked the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. I remember the excitement of the hundreds of Australian women who attended Beijing twenty years ago to be part of the global movement seeking equality for women and girls and I thought about these women as I fulfilled my lifelong dream of continuing, contributing and advancing these aspirations.

The Australian delegation arrived in New York to snow storms and political storms because for the first time women’s civil society organisations were left out of the negotiations for the Political Declaration. “Nothing about us, without us” became a powerful slogan for women attending CSW59 as concern increased about their exclusion and the overall weakness of the document. At our first briefing for non-government delegates, Government advisers provided their analysis about the Political Declaration process and the mechanism used to include the voices of civil society organisations in the final Declaration. These daily briefings become a valued space for delegates to come together to share and discuss the day’s events and provide insights into the meetings and events being attended by Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Australia’s Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick and Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, H.E Natasha Stott Despoja.

Women attended CSW59 for a myriad of reasons: to hear about progress, to be inspired, to network and build connections, to showcase good practice, share experiences and to hold governments to account on their progress on gender equality. With well over 11,000 delegates, 200 side events and 400 parallel events over the two weeks it would be easy to be overwhelmed. I attended more than thirty workshops and events on a diverse range of topics covering women’s economic empowerment, gender based violence, poverty alleviation programmes, sexual and reproductive health, women’s leadership, Women, Peace and Security and met many courageous and strong women from around the globe.

My highlights and impressions include:

- The strong united presence of the Pacific Island nations and ways they are alleviating gender based violence in a culturally inclusive way.
- The strong presence of young women and girls presenting as leaders of today – they’re not waiting for tomorrow.
- The transformative and brave work of women human rights defenders working in post conflict situations in Somalia, a country with zero tolerance for female genital mutilation and cutting and where young people want the practice stopped.
- Against the backdrop of continuing conflict and war, women travelled from South Sudan to proudly present their Women’s Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development.
- How research into the intersection of Islam and women’s human rights is shaping a feminist analysis of the Qur’an and exploring gender equality within the Islamic framework.
- The successful poverty alleviation programmes in Ethiopia where thousands of rural women are moving out of poverty through the simple act of being included on land titles, as the Chair of the event stated ... “if you want to remove poverty you need women involved and Africa cannot rise without women”.
- The emergent programmes working with men and boys as allies in changing social norms for gender equality, as the co-founder of MenEnage said “Men of Quality are not afraid of equality”.
- Celebrating International Women’s Day, marching from the UN Headquarters to Times Square with thousands of women, calling for gender equality of “50–50 by 2030”.


Report by Ms Maria Osman (continued)

I was proud to be part of the Australian Government delegation headed by Senator Michaelia Cash who used every opportunity to promote Australia’s commitment to gender equality and presented one of the strongest inclusive Country Statements in the UN General Assembly and H.E Natasha Stott Despoja one of only three Ambassadors for Women and Girls worldwide. So many women commented on the depth of our delegation, the quality of the Australian side events and our strong relationship with civil society organisations. As a nation we certainly made our positive presence felt on this world stage.

My co-delegate Kimberley and I developed a very good working relationship; we learned much from our different perspectives and experiences and this was vital in our work to advocate and build links across the delegation. This was clearly demonstrated in the second week, during the drawn out and tense negotiations to ensure critical wording around human rights, gender equality and the inclusion of civil society were not diluted in the final Working Methods Resolution. Yet again civil society was shut out of the process resulting in over 300 organisations releasing a strong statement voicing their frustration. Throughout the long night of negotiations the non-government delegates provided wise counsel and guidance to Australia’s negotiators who ensured a better outcome than envisaged and a stronger final Resolution.

As I reflect on this wonderful, unique and rare opportunity it is pleasing to note that over the past 20 years much has been achieved in gender equality, however there is still much to do. There was one consistent thread throughout CSW59 that was both troubling and a signpost for change: the level of violence against women and girls is endemic and the common denominator for successfully countering this violence is a vibrant strong feminist civil society.

Over the coming year as we head to CSW60 the focus will be on ensuring gender equality is at the centre of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and lobbying to ensure civil society organisations are not left out of key negotiations as they were this year.

I would like to thank the Australian Government for the opportunity to attend CSW59 as part of the official delegation and I look forward to sharing the experience with women’s organisation across Australia.
Report by Ms Kimberley Abbott

I was privileged to be included on the Australian Government delegation to CSW59. Australia had such a strong and influential presence at CSW59, and the enthusiasm, passion, and dedication shown by Minister Cash, the Ambassador for Women and Girls, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner and the other members of the delegation asserted Australia’s strong position on gender equality and made me very proud to be an Australian. The Country Statement delivered by Minister Cash was important and powerful and was encouraging in its reflection of the unwavering commitment of the Australian Government to achieving gender equality.

I was fortunate in my role as a non-government delegate to attend so many events on topics ranging from the economic empowerment of women, the role of men and boys, increasing women’s workforce participation, the role of sports in women’s empowerment and the importance of gender statistics and indicators. I also had the opportunity to play an active role at a number of roundtable discussions.

One highlight was the roundtable discussion which focused on the development of indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting the need to disaggregate existing data, and integrate across sectors, to make most efficient and effective use of financing.

With the growing emergence of technology in society, there were many discussions on cyber technology and Australia hosted a successful side event on Preventing Violence Against Women in the Digital and Technological Age. There was also an encouraging focus at CSW59 on the value and role of young people in the development process. As a young person, I was fortunate to be able to participate in the inspiring Young Women and Girls Forum, Intergenerational Dialogue Day, and I was also invited to actively participate in the Girls Advocacy Roundtable.

The negotiations are always an eventful and important part of CSW sessions and this year included the negotiation of the Working Methods Resolution. This resulted in a marathon negotiation session that reached consensus at 1:30am. As an non-government delegate you are privileged to be able to be present in, and assist with, the negotiation process. Staff from the Australian Permanent Mission did a stellar job, demonstrating dedication and experience in ensuring Australia was at the centre of the negotiations. Government representatives included on the delegation were always on-hand to answer our questions and take our recommendations.

Ultimately, a strong commitment and resolution was passed with important references to human rights and the role of civil society maintained in the document and progress through interactive dialogue inclusions will ensure the Commission continues to be effective in future.

The inclusive nature of the Commission is perhaps one of its greatest assets. It’s an event where non-government organisations can mingle with ministers and ambassadors, where politicians share panels with academics and celebrities, and ultimately foster a cross-pollination of ideas, and a deeper and shared understanding of gender equality in all its forms. As non-government delegates, we liaised with Australian and International non-government organisations leading up to, and throughout CSW59. Evening de-briefs were held throughout CSW59 and whether they were held in hotel meeting rooms or on chairs at the UN cafeteria, they were always a valuable way to provide updates and seek feedback from each other and for individuals to network and build relationships.

CSW59 was a crucial and inspiring way to share all the work that is being done to reach the shared goal of global gender equality.

I would like to thank the Australian Government for this incredible opportunity and I look forward to carrying forth the lessons and experiences from CSW59 to continue the work for gender equality back here in Australia.
As Head of the Delegation to CSW59, the role of Minister Cash is to; represent the Australian Government’s position on gender equality and women’s empowerment during official proceedings; engage with like-minded countries and civil society to share the good work Australia is doing to assist women and girls achieve equality both domestically and internationally; and listen and learn about the experiences of these women so that she can better inform the government’s policy agenda.

The Minister’s programme was developed in consultation with a number of stakeholders to ensure it reflected the Government’s engagement strategy for CSW59 aligned with the Government’s domestic agenda for gender equality and its foreign policy objectives. In total, the Minister held 15 bilateral meetings and participated in 13 side events in addition to official CSW59 events.

The Ambassador for Women and Girls undertook a separate, complementary programme to the Minister, focusing on her work in the Asia-Pacific – Indian Ocean region, particularly in relation to addressing violence against women, political participation and multiple disadvantage. In total, the Ambassador participated in 17 bilateral meetings and presented at six side events, as well as representing Australia at a number of official functions and other plenary sessions.

Copies of Minister and Ambassador’s programmes are at Annex C.

International Women’s Day

On 8 March every year, International Women’s Day is celebrated by many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognised for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political.

In 2015, a number of events were held prior to the commencement of official CSW59 proceedings to celebrate International Women’s Day and the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Beijing Declaration.

Minister Cash co-hosted a breakfast with the World YWCA General Secretary, Ms Nyaradzayu Gumbonzvanda on the morning of International Women’s Day. The event was attended by members of the Australian and World YWCA delegations, including a number of young women delegates from around the world.

In her speech Minister Cash congratulated the YWCA for its significant contribution to women’s leadership and for its long history of supporting young women to actively participate in CSW. As part of the event the young women in attendance were invited to share their stories, identify an inspirational woman who had influenced their lives and contribute a single word that represents women to them, captured in the following graphic.
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION PROGRAMME

As Head of the Delegation to CSW59, the role of Minister Cash is to: represent the Australian Government’s position on gender equality and women’s empowerment during official proceedings; engage with like-minded countries and civil society to share the good work Australia is doing to assist women and girls achieve equality both domestically and internationally; and listen and learn about the experiences of these women so that she can better inform the government’s policy agenda.

The Minister’s programme was developed in consultation with a number of stakeholders to ensure it reflected the Government’s engagement strategy for CSW59 aligned with the Government’s domestic agenda for gender equality and its foreign policy objectives. In total, the Minister held 15 bilateral meetings and participated in 13 side events in addition to official CSW59 events.

The Ambassador for Women and Girls undertook a separate, complementary programme to the Minister, focusing on her work in the Asia-Pacific – Indian Ocean region, particularly in relation to addressing violence against women, political participation and multiple disadvantage. In total, the Ambassador participated in 17 bilateral meetings and presented at six side events, as well as representing Australia at a number of official functions and other plenary sessions.

Copies of Minister and Ambassador’s programmes are at Annex C.

International Women’s Day

On 8 March every year, International Women’s Day is celebrated by many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognised for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political.

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As part of the event the young women in attendance were invited to share their stories, identify an inspirational woman who had influenced their lives and contribute a single word that represents women to them, captured in the following graphic.
The Australian delegation also took part in UN Women’s International Women’s Day march, which launched the Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights campaign. The campaign asks governments to make national commitments to address the challenges that are holding women and girls back from reaching their full potential within the next 15 years. For further details see http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/step-it-up.

The Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, and the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, H.E Natasha Stott Despoja, attending the UN Women ‘March in March’ for gender equality.

The Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, H.E Gillian Bird, the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, H.E Natasha Stott Despoja and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash with participants at the World YWCA International Women’s Day Breakfast.
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Official CSW59 Proceedings

CSW59 was opened on 9 March by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon. In the opening address, the Secretary-General reaffirmed his commitment to achieving gender equality, drawing particular attention to the need to involve women in conflict and post-conflict situations and increase women’s leadership.

As part of CSW59, each country presented a Country Statement to the Commission. These statements outline a country’s priorities for the session and highlight examples of good practice relating to the priority theme.

As head of the delegation, Minister Cash delivered Australia’s Country Statement to the Commission, acknowledging achievements made since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration while emphasising the remaining gaps in the realisation of human rights of women and girls. See Annex D for the full text of Australia’s Country Statement.

Other Country Statements can be found at https://papersmart.unmeetings.org/ecosoc/csw/csw59/statements/.

As part of the official CSW59 programme, a series of high level plenary sessions, including roundtables and panels, were held to examine priority issues relating to the themes for discussion. The official programme for CSW59 can be found at http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/official-meetings.

Minister Cash delivered an intervention at the CSW59 High Level Roundtable discussion on Making the Economy Work for Women and Girls, highlighting, among other practical measures, the commitment made by G20 nations under Australia’s presidency to close the gap between male and female workforce participation rates by 25 per cent by 2025.
Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, moderated a Ministerial Roundtable entitled *Accountability for realising defacto equality for women and girls*. The interactive discussion focused on practical measures governments can take to accelerate substantive equality for women.

**Bilateral Meetings**

While at CSW59 Minister Cash and the Ambassador held bilateral meetings with ministerial counterparts, heads of delegation and senior UN officials. During these meetings Minister Cash reinforced Australia’s commitment to the Beijing Declaration, and emphasised Australia’s work domestically, in the Asia-Pacific region and internationally to advance the human rights of women and girls by progressing the Women, Peace and Security agenda; promoting women’s economic empowerment; and addressing violence against women.

In these meetings Minister Cash advocated for the elimination of gender based violence, particularly harmful traditional practices including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage – highlighting the legislative and judicial progress made in Australia. She also emphasised the important role played by Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls and encouraged other nations to consider creating a dedicated ambassadorial position for progressing gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Australia’s efforts to advance women’s empowerment in the international context, through the aid programme and foreign policy initiatives, including ongoing projects and future opportunities for collaboration, were also a key focus of discussions.

Australia’s reputation as an active champion on the Women, Peace and Security agenda and women’s participation in conflict prevention and resolution was commended by a number of interlocutors, including representatives from UN agencies.
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CSW59 Side Events

In addition to the formal CSW59 programme, participating countries, UN Agencies and non-government organisations hosted a variety of side events focused on the progress of the Beijing Declaration, as well as gender equality more broadly. Australia hosted four side events at CSW59.

Preventing Violence against Women and Girls in the Digital and Technological Age – examined the intersection between technology and gender-based violence. The discussion focused on how technology can act as both a tool to prevent violence against women and girls, as well as a means to facilitate harassment and abuse. Technology can also be used by law enforcement and the judicial system to build a case against perpetrators.

In delivering opening remarks, Minister Cash drew particular attention to the link between technology and domestic violence situations. The Minister went on to Chair the panel discussion featuring H.E Natasha Stott Despoja, the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, Cindy Southworth, Vice President of Development and Innovation at National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), Julie Oberin, National Chair of Women’s Services Network (WESNET) and Bandana Rana, Executive Chair of Saathi.

Increasing Women’s Workforce Participation: Barriers and Solutions from the G20 and Beyond – highlighted the recent agreement of G20 leaders to increase women’s workforce participation by 25 per cent by 2025 and discussed strategies to reach this target. Panellists included representatives from Japan, Spain, Vietnam and Turkey, as well as the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner. Minister Cash delivered opening remarks and highlighted in particular the detrimental impact of pregnancy discrimination.

Australia hosted a further two side events in the second week of the Commission.

The first – Where does change come from? Driving social transformation to prevent violence against women – was developed in partnership with Our Watch and focused on preventing violence before it happens. The event brought together Australian Government and Australian and international civil society representatives to share case studies from around the world and examine recent progress and challenges in promoting gender equality and ending violence against women through change at the individual, community and government levels.

The final Australian side event – Transforming Poverty Measurement to Reveal Women’s Experiences – was developed in partnership with the International Women’s Development Agency who has pioneered the development of a new poverty measure. The Individual Deprivation Measure is a tool designed to enable accurate sex-disaggregation of data, based on the views of poor women and men. The event considered to what extent existing poverty measurement methods are ineffective in making gender visible and discussed the adoption of a new approach which recognises women and girls.

Australia also co-sponsored an additional six side events organised by other nations and organisations that were consistent with Australia’s domestic and international priorities. These events included a panel discussion, held at the Australian Mission on 15 years after the adoption of resolution 1325: Closing the implementation gap. The event was developed in partnership with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development Assistance Committee Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET).

The event was an opportunity to explore the challenges and progress made in translating the Women, Peace And Security agenda into action 15 years after the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325, and to identify priorities for closing the implementation deficit. GENDERNET presented a new report outlining donor spending on gender equality in fragile and conflict affected countries. The conversation between participants could not have been more timely, 2015 has the potential to be a landmark year for gender equality and women’s rights globally and this year three reviews are being undertaken relating to the Women, Peace And Security agenda. At the event, participants considered opportunities available through the review process to ensure the UN system recognises the critical role of women in building and maintaining, inclusive and sustainable peace.
The other side events Australia co-sponsored were:

- Preventing and responding to violence against women co-hosted by George Washington University
- Pacific Women Rising! Progress towards Achieving Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the Pacific co-hosted by New Zealand and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
- Advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities: Reports from the frontline co-hosted by Women’s Refugee Council
- High-level Panel: Women in Political Leadership – Achieving equality in political decision-making co-hosted by Algeria, Switzerland and Chile
- High-Level Side Event on Equal Nationality Rights co-hosted by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Women, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Algeria, Portugal and the United States

Further Engagement

During CSW59 the Australian delegation participated in a number of high-level receptions including one hosted by UN Women to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration.

H.E, Gillian Bird PSM, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations hosted a reception for the Australian delegation and representatives from Australian civil society which provided an opportunity for engagement with key non-government stakeholders in a more intimate and relaxed setting.

The Minister met with a number of Pacific Ministers and senior officials at the Pacific Roundtable and Lunch hosted with New Zealand’s Minister for Women, the Hon Louise Upston. During discussions Minister Cash reinforced the importance of tackling violence against women in the region and Australia’s willingness to continue to partner in these efforts, as well as emphasising the value of increasing women’s economic and political participation.

H.E Natasha Stott Despoja, the Ambassador for Women and Girls co-hosted a reception on the Equal Futures Partnership (EFP) with her US counterpart, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues, Ms Catherine Russell. The reception acknowledged the concrete commitments made by members under the partnership to empower women in their own countries and launched a new EFP Steering Committee.

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner, co-Chaired the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Leadership Group, and the WEP’s Leadership Awards at the WEP’s Annual Event. This Annual Event was opened by Ms Hillary Rodham Clinton, former Senator, and U.S. Secretary of State, H.E Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General and other dignitaries. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner also took part in a panel discussion at UN Women’s Intergenerational Dialogue.

The Australian Government delegation also hosted daily briefings for Australian civil society representatives to keep them informed of the delegations activities throughout CSW59. The daily briefings also provided an opportunity for civil society representatives to interact with the delegation in an informal setting; build relationships with each other; discuss issues of concern to Australian women; and share any lessons learnt from their time at CSW59.
Women’s Empowerment Principles Annual Event, New York, 10 March 2015. From left to right: Elizabeth Broderick, Co-Chair Women’s Empowerment Principles Leadership Group; Georg Kell, Executive Director, UN Global Compact; Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women; H.E Manuela Schwesig, Federal Minister of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany; H.E Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General; H.E Zorana Mihajlović, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Construction, Transport & Infrastructure, Republic of Serbia; Ms Hillary Rodham Clinton, former Senator and U.S. Secretary of State; H.E Mary Robinson, United Nations Special Envoy for Climate Change, United Nations; Joseph Keefe, President & Chief Executive Officer, Pax World Management and Co-Chair Women’s Empowerment Principles Leadership Group.
Non-Government Delegates

The two non-government delegates had the opportunity to attend a range of events including:

- Young Women and Girls Forum: Inspiring Leadership
- CSW59 NGO Forum Consultation Day
- Sexuality Education: the way forward for equality and empowerment
- Measuring Progress for Adolescent Girls Roundtable
- Economic Empowerment of Women to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals
- Girls Advocacy Roundtable
- Women’s Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship
- Girls at the Centre – Roundtable discussion on the importance of girls in ending violence against women and girls
- Asia Pacific NGO Roundtable
- Leading Peaceful Revolution: Indigenous Women at Beijing +20
- UN Women Intergenerational Dialogue
- The Place of Sport for Women’s Empowerment
- Indigenous Women and Beijing +20
- New Partnerships for Addressing and Preventing Gender Based Violence
- Recognising Common Ground: Islam and Women’s Human Rights
- Current Challenges in Combating Human Trafficking 20 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
- Official CSW Panel Discussions
- Women in Small-Scale and Artisanal Mining
- Women’s Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development in South Sudan

Australian civil society representatives Claire Tatyzo, Maria Osman, Susan Hutchinson, Caroline Lambert, Annie McCall, Helen Dalley-Fisher and Kimberly Abbott at the conclusion of negotiations on the Working Methods Resolution.
OUTCOMES OF CSW59

Political Declaration

CSW59 gave rise to a series of key outcomes. The Political Declaration is of paramount significance to advancing gender and equality and the empowerment of women and girls beyond CSW59. In reflecting the text of the original agreement, the Political Declaration highlights the international community’s ongoing commitment to implementing the Beijing Declaration’s progressive vision.

The multilateral negotiations on the Political Declaration represented the competing interests of many states. In this process Australia’s primary goal was to ensure the Declaration represented progress, or at a minimum, did not result in a step backwards. In addition, Australia campaigned for the insertion of specific references to the human rights of women and girls and for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment to be included in the post-2015 development agenda.

The Australian Government welcomes the final CSW59 Political Declaration and believes that the document highlights the international community’s ongoing commitment to, and the enduring relevance of, the Beijing Declaration. Importantly, the Political Declaration emphasises that this is very much the beginning and not the end of the conversation on gender equality.

The full text of the CSW59 Political Declaration can be found at Appendix E.

During a normal year the outcomes document for CSW is a set of Agreed Conclusions which make recommendations on concrete actions Member States can undertake to progress gender equality as it relates to the priority theme. These Agreed Conclusions are negotiated in the second week of CSW and civil society representatives are able to provide input into these discussions through government officials in the room.

Every five years is a five year review and the outcomes document is a Political Declaration, which is negotiated prior to the commencement of the CSW session and adopted by Minister’s during the first week of proceedings. CSW59 was such a review year.

The Australian Government has a long history of supporting civil society engagement in international forums like CSW and takes every opportunity available to seek input on its position during the lead up to and throughout CSW each year.

Resolution on the Working Methods of the Commission

CSW59 also presented the opportunity to review the working methods of the Commission. The resulting Working Methods Resolution importantly acknowledges the invaluable role of non-government organisations (NGOs), as well as other civil society actors, in advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the agenda of the Commission.

The Working Methods Resolution also outlines that the role of NGOs will be further strengthened in years to come to facilitate a greater contribution to the Commission’s processes. Specifically, the Working Methods Resolution details that time will be allocated for NGO representatives to deliver statements on themes relevant to the session. In addition, the opportunity to contribute during panels, interactive dialogues and the end of general discussion will be extended to civil society representatives. Member states are also encouraged to include civil society representatives on their official delegation.
Moving forward, the Australian Government will continue to campaign for the inclusion of language that supports the role of civil society representatives at the Commission. There will be a further review of the working methods at CSW60 (March 2016) in light of the anticipated adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in September 2015.


Outcomes of the Beijing +20 Global Review

The Beijing +20 Global Review was commissioned to measure the global progress toward achieving gender equality since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration. States were called upon to undertake a comprehensive review of the gains made and challenges encountered in implementing the Beijing Declaration’s vision. As part of this process, Australia prepared a report highlighting key achievements made in advancing the 12 Critical Areas of Concern.

Australia’s report for the Beijing +20 Global Review can be found at: http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/national_reviews/australia_review_beijing20.pdf.

Following the collection of national data, a report was prepared by the Secretary-General. In turn, UN Women provided a summary report of the Secretary-General’s findings. The UN Women report synthesises the Secretary-General’s conclusions and highlights the current challenges as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective.

The UN Women summary report notes that the greatest inhibitors of true gender equality remain unstable economic and political landscapes. In addition, persistent conflicts, volatile food and energy prices and climate change have exacerbated inequalities and the vulnerability of women and girls on a global scale. To this end, the UN Women report observes that the achievement of gender equality is facing a new threat from rising extremism which denies the human rights of women and girls.


Australia’s Engagement at the Asia-Pacific Regional Review

The Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing +20 Review saw the region finalise a consensus statement reflecting the regional progress made and obstacles that remain in implementing the Beijing Declaration. Despite efforts by more conservative member states, the outcomes document did not result in a significant rolling back of previously agreed language on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In order to achieve a consensus document, however, progressive language on sexual orientation and gender identity and sexual and reproductive rights, was omitted from the final text. This is despite a strong push by the majority of member states who were present at the negotiations for its inclusion.

It is increasingly difficult to reach consensus in international negotiations on progressive elements of gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment and human rights. Australia supports the inclusion of progressive language on sexual orientation and gender diversity.
Post-2015 Development Agenda

With the expiry of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, the UN will agree in September 2015, on a post-2015 development agenda with a set of new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While non-binding, the agenda will shape international development cooperation and development finance flows to 2030 and beyond. The MDGs encompass eight globally agreed goals in the areas of poverty alleviation, education, gender equality and the empowerment of women, child and maternal health, environmental sustainability, reducing HIV/AIDS and communicable diseases, and building a global partnership for development. The SDGs will build on the MDGs and address the social, economic and environmental aspects of Sustainable Development.

Complementing progress made at CSW59, there is considerable support for a post-2015 development agenda which prioritises gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Australia has been a strong supporter of taking a ‘twin-track’ approach to gender in the SDGs, which sees gender equality addressed through both a standalone goal and mainstreamed across all the components of the post-2015 agenda.

To comprehensively deliver on gender equality and women’s empowerment, the new agenda will need to address: violence against women; economic empowerment of women, including through access, control and ownership of economic, financial and other productive resources; women’s leadership and participation at all levels in the public and private sectors; and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

While recognising the SDGs are a global means to address gender inequality, we should also recognise the crucial role that women play as agents for change and as being critical to delivering on the ambition of the new post-2015 development agenda.
CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with civil society on key issues relating to gender equality, both domestically and internationally, is a key priority for the Australian Government. The Government is committed to working with non-government stakeholders to draw on their expertise, insights and to ensure that a broad range of knowledge and experiences inform its policy positions.

More broadly, the Australian Government, primarily through the Office for Women based in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, engages with civil society in the lead up to the upcoming CSW session each year. As part of this engagement, the Office for Women invites input from the non-government sector on key issues relevant to the session’s themes and also disseminates information to assist non-government organisation involvement in the session, including raising awareness domestically of gender equality issues after the session has concluded.

This year, for CSW59, the Office for Women ran an open submissions process for non-government organisations to provide input on relevant issues. Eighteen submissions were received and fed into the development of Australia’s priorities for CSW59.

The Office for Women disseminates information regarding Commission processes and upcoming sessions to its stakeholders. Individuals can be included on the mailing list by contacting the Office for Women at womensbranchinternational@pmc.gov.au.

“In addition to providing the Government with important insight into their own areas of expertise, experiences and perspectives, civil society delegates are central in ensuring that new and emerging issues come to the forefront of national, and ultimately international, attention.

We should be very proud of Australia’s strong civil society presence at CSW 59. It is well known that a well-established and active civil society is a predictor of success, and I see civil society as the Government’s strongest partner on the road to gender equality.”

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Ministerial Statement to Parliament, May 2015
National Women’s Alliances

As part of their core work the five National Women’s Alliances are expected to engage in and collaborate on the Commission’s processes. Each year, depending on the theme for the session, one Alliance will take the lead on this work. Individual Alliances may also choose to fund the attendance of representatives.

For CSW59, the Equality Rights Alliances (ERA): took the lead in co-ordinating joint Alliances activities including preparing a joint submission on the government’s priorities; acted as a liaison point between Australian civil society representatives and the Australian Government delegation; hosted a pre-CSW teleconference; worked with the non-government delegates on the Australian Government delegation to co-ordinate evening briefings held throughout CSW59; and hosted a post-CSW59 ‘International Engagement Forum’ to enable Alliance members, other civil society representatives and government to discuss the outcomes of CSW59 and the finalisation of the SDGs.

ERA sent Programme Manager, Ms Helen Dalley-Fisher to New York as part of the YWCA Australia delegation. While at CSW59 she attended meetings of the Women’s Rights Caucus; engaged in direct advocacy work with government and other like-minded organisations; moderated a highly successful event entitled Transforming Gender-Based Stereotypes in Women’s Leadership and Violence against Women: A Cultural and Age Diversity Perspective; featuring a panel drawn from across the World YWCA movement; and attended a number of side events on a wide range of topics.

On the future of CSW Ms Dalley-Fisher noted:

It will be critical going forward that lines of communication between the Australian Government and Australian NGOs are maintained, as there is little sign that the Commission is actively seeking to improve civil society engagement at CSW sessions in the short term. It is also critical that we particularly focus on bringing forward the voices of marginalised women, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, women from rural and remote areas, young women and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. It will also be important that Australia continues to support Pacific Nations to participate fully in CSW sessions and other international processes.

The civil society work to safeguard language around women’s human rights, gender equality and the critical role of civil society organisations in CSW documents must continue in conjunction with supportive States. CSW60 will be particularly significant in this respect as the Commission considers the scope and themes of its future work.

As well as being the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, 2015 marks the conclusion of the MDGs. The work done on the Post-2015 Development agenda over the last few years has resulted in a growing realisation of the importance of ensuring that gender is properly considered in the SDGs and in parallel processes such as the Financing for Development work. There are important questions for Australian NGOs to consider about how to most efficiently resource and manage our collective involvement in these various spaces.

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2 For CSW59 each Alliance was approved to use part of their core funding, provided by the Australian Government under the Women’s Leadership and Development Strategy, to send up to two delegates to New York. Some Alliances chose not to undertake this option and instead focus efforts on other core activities. Other Alliances sought external funding to enable additional delegates to attend.
The Australian Women against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) delegation included Ms Julie Oberin, AWAVA Chair, Ms Sophie Hardefeldt, AWAVA Programme Manager, Ms Margaret Augerinos, AWAVA Advisory Group Member (self-funded) and Ms Pauline Woodbridge, AWAVA Advisory Group Member (self-funded).

AWAVA’s participation at CSW59 focused on knowledge sharing through side events and parallel events as well as engagement with the Australian Government delegation and official negotiation processes. AWAVA facilitated four parallel events and its delegates participated in a further two parallel events and two Australian Government hosted side events.

**In reflecting on the outcomes of CSW59, Ms Oberin noted:**

AWAVA was pleased to be able to participate in CSW59 and to engage with the global processes aiming to improve gender equality. We felt that the 2015 event provided a strong space to share knowledge and experiences on an international level. We also found the conversation about the SDGs to be extremely interesting and informative, particularly since, unlike the MDGs; the SDGs have domestic implications for Australia. We also gained strong knowledge through our attendance at various parallel and side events and caucuses, as well as through the networking opportunities the CSW59 provided. We thought the Asia Pacific Roundtable on Violence against Women was a particularly strong space for our region to engage collectively around an issue that is prevalent in all counties.

AWAVA was concerned about the exclusion of civil society from the Commission’s official processes throughout CSW59. We felt that the negotiation of the Political Declaration prior to the beginning of the CSW59 meant that civil society’s voice was marginalised and the document was significantly weaker than it could have been.

We were also disappointed at the lack of leadership shown by some of the world’s governments throughout CSW59. It is concerning that, 20 years after the development of the Beijing Declaration, we would be facing a situation where ‘not moving backwards’ is considered to be a positive outcome. This brings into question the commitment of all governments to use the Commission’s processes, as well as other international fora, to progress women’s rights.

Having said this we are acutely aware of the challenges our government negotiators face during these global meetings and we were pleased that Australia was such a strong progressive voice during the negotiations and successful in ensuring human rights language was included in both the Political Declaration and the Working Methods Resolution.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Alliance (NATSIWA) were fortunate enough to send two delegates from the NATSIWA Board who were accompanied by a self-funded youth delegate.

**Ms Tracey Currie, CEO of NATSIWA said:**

One of the highlights of CSW59 was the Australian side event on individual poverty measures. This interested the NATSIWA delegates as in Australia many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still live below the poverty line. Current government initiatives aim to close the gap across a range of social and economic determinants for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and thus aim to measure improvements in these areas.

NATSIWA encourage the utilisation of the poverty measurement tool the ‘Individual Deprivation Measure’ together with improved data collection and analysis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples economic status to inform future government policy.

The NATSIWA delegate’s expressed their gratitude at being able to experience CSW59 first-hand and engage in discussions on social justice issues at a global level.
Other Civil Society Engagement

JERA International

In the lead up to CSW59 JERA International coordinated the input for the Working Together for Equality NGO Beijing +20 Review (2014). The report includes input from 1,879 women, 151 men and 24 national organisations, alliances and peak bodies who represent the voices of many thousands of women and men who participated in the review process. JERA International took the information from this review into the Civil Society Regional Forum and on to the High Level Meetings on Beijing +20 held at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok in November 2014.


During CSW59 as well as engaging with the Australian Government delegation, attending daily briefings and attending a number of major events, side events and workshops, JERA International worked collaboratively with Asia Pacific Women Watch (APWW) to present key issues from the Beijing +20 Review process at a parallel event held at the Church Centre and attended by over 80 participants.

They also worked with the International Network on Elimination of Violence against Women (INEVAW) and presented alongside the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women on issues related to Violence in Armed Conflict, Conflict Affected and Militarised areas; and worked collaboratively with the Asia Pacific NGO CSW Committee to host Regional Caucus meetings.

The key event for JERA International at CSW59 was the Working with Men and Boys: A Critical Dialogue workshop. Both Minister Cash and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner were panellists at the event which was attended by over 40 participants, Minister Cash also gave the opening address.

The workshop was put together in response to growing concerns, raised through the Australian civil society Beijing +20 review, regarding the constraints and challenges of working with men and boys in the push for gender equality and women’s empowerment. As such the workshop was an opportunity to engage in a critical discussion around working with men and boys, and a chance to explore not only the possibilities that this approach opens up but also the discomforts and challenges that are raised when working with men and boys.

The panel discussion was framed by a number of questions which were designed to explore the discursive tensions around working with men and boys and also the practical possibilities and challenges of incorporating men and boys into already existing women’s spaces.

While the discussion covered a diverse range of issues and topics the key messages that emerged were:

• When engaging with men and boys there needs to be an acknowledgment of the hard work that feminists, women’s rights activists and women’s organisations have done and continue to do to address gender inequality

• The struggle for gender equality is also a struggle that men and boys face and it therefore takes both men and women to achieve gender equality. However when engaging with men and boys in this work we need to ensure that the focus remains on women’s organisations and that men and boys are positioned as allies in this work

• As feminists we need to set a precedent about how work engaging men and boys is done, especially when we are trying to transform gender norms and stereotypes. A central aspect of any work engaging with men and boys needs to include unlearning sexism and stereotypes.
Other Civil Society Engagement

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In the lead up to CSW59 JERA International coordinated the input for the *Working Together for Equality NGO Beijing +20 Review (2014)*. The report includes input from 1,879 women, 151 men and 24 national organisations, alliances and peak bodies who represent the voices of many thousands of women and men who participated in the review process.

JERA International took the information from this review into the Civil Society Regional Forum and on to the High Level Meetings on Beijing +20 held at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok in November 2014.


During CSW59 as well as engaging with the Australian Government delegation, attending daily briefings and attending a number of major events, side events and workshops, JERA International worked collaboratively with Asia Pacific Women Watch (APWW) to present key issues from the Beijing +20 Review process at a parallel event held at the Church Centre and attended by over 80 participants.

They also worked with the International Network on Elimination of Violence against Women (INEVAW) and presented alongside the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women on issues related to Violence in Armed Conflict, Conflict Affected and Militarised areas; and worked collaboratively with the Asia Pacific NGO CSW Committee to host Regional Caucus meetings.

The key event for JERA International at CSW59 was the *Working with Men and Boys: A Critical Dialogue* workshop. Both Minister Cash and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner were panellists at the event which was attended by over 40 participants, Minister Cash also gave the opening address.

The workshop was put together in response to growing concerns, raised through the Australian civil society Beijing +20 review, regarding the constraints and challenges of working with men and boys in the push for gender equality and women’s empowerment. As such the workshop was an opportunity to engage in a critical discussion around working with men and boys, and a chance to explore not only the possibilities that this approach opens up but also the discomforts and challenges that are raised when working with men and boys.

The panel discussion was framed by a number of questions which were designed to explore the discursive tensions around working with men and boys and also the practical possibilities and challenges of incorporating men and boys into already existing women’s spaces.

While the discussion covered a diverse range of issues and topics the key messages that emerged were:

- When engaging with men and boys there needs to be an acknowledgment of the hard work that feminists, women’s rights activists and women’s organisations have done and continue to do to address gender inequality
- The struggle for gender equality is also a struggle that men and boys face and it therefore takes both men and women to achieve gender equality. However when engaging with men and boys in this work we need to ensure that the focus remains on women’s organisations and that men and boys are positioned as allies in this work
- As feminists we need to set a precedent about how work engaging men and boys is done, especially when we are trying to transform gender norms and stereotypes. A central aspect of any work engaging with men and boys needs to include unlearning sexism and stereotypes
JERA International (continued)

- When engaging with men and boys as leaders and agents for change in the struggle for gender equality we need to be clear about what kind of leadership we want to encourage, ensuring that emphasis is placed on modeling collaborative forms of leadership in order to avoid the dangers of gender washing and reinforcing men and boy's roles as allies.

- While there is, by and large, consensus around the need to include men and boys in gender equality work, as feminists we need to remain vigilant about the discourse within which this engagement is undertaken and ensure that it is firmly embedded within a women's human rights framework.

With the global focus and momentum around working with men and boys in the push for gender equality and women's empowerment, the workshop was an opportunity to bring together women working with men and boys at the grassroots level; in government and business; and, in academia in order to highlight key issues moving forward into the post-2015 development agenda.

International Women's Development Agency

While at CSW59 the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) brought its campaign to *End the Right to Rape* to the world stage and presented it to our senior government officials and UN representatives. The campaign reached over 2.633 million people and presents IWDA with an exciting new space for advocacy work linked to policy and programme interventions for women's safety and security.


The Australian Government hosted side event, showcasing the Individual Deprivation Measure, IWDA's pioneering work in measuring poverty at the individual level that is gender sensitive, was presented to a packed room of over 140 international delegates and leaders. The response to the tool has been significant in opening up new leads to future innovation and application.

IWDA also widely distributed its sixth issue of *Gender Matters The Beijing Platform for Action: IWDA partnership perspectives of a 20 year journey* which was specifically written for CSW59 to give voice and visibility to the stories, reflections and opinions of sixteen IWDA partner organisations across Asia and the Pacific, most of whom were not able to attend CSW59.


Our Watch

The Our Watch delegation spoke at numerous events including in conjunction with the World Health Organisation on the recently released Lancet Series of papers on violence against women.

The Australian Government hosted side event *Where does change come from? Driving social transformation to prevent violence against women* was delivered to a full house. It brought together exciting discussion on creating futures without violence against women, bringing case studies together from Africa, Europe, Latin America and Australia.

YWCA Australia

A delegation of ten women (Alisa Draskovic, Annie McCall, Cara Gleeson, Caroline Lambert, Claire Tatyzo, Helen Dalley-Fisher, Jane Alver, Krista Seddon, Michelle Deshong and Nicole Swaine) from the YWCA Australia formed part of the 80-strong World YWCA delegation who took part in CSW59.

While in New York these delegates connected with government representatives, presented workshops, co-hosted side events, met with stakeholders and reviewed strategies for gender equality including trying to influence negotiation of the Working Methods Resolution.

Ms Caroline Lambert, Executive Director of YWCA Australia noted:

By going to CSW59 we contributed to a global civil society effort to hold governments to account for their work to make the myriad strategies for women’s equality contained in the Beijing Declaration a reality in the day-to-day lives of women and communities around the world.

YWCA’s around the world seek to influence the outcomes of the CSW sessions through advocacy with our Governments. The strong relationship the YWCA Australia has with the Australian Government in relation to this work is recognised throughout the YWCA movement as an exemplar of best practice engagement between civil society and government. From the call for NGO submissions to inform the Australian Government advocacy priorities for the upcoming CSW session, to the pre-departure meetings and daily briefings throughout the session, the lines of communication remain open.

We were proud of the Australian Government’s fierce determination to see language on human rights, gender equality and civil society participation in the Political Declaration and Working Methods Resolution, and appreciated the opportunity to provide support to the delegates inside the room.

Away from the UN we were exceptionally proud to co-host, with the YWCA of Canada, a panel discussion on the human rights of Indigenous women. Michelle Deshong spoke powerfully of the activism and leadership of Aboriginal women in the Australian community, joining sisters from Canada who drew attention to campaigns and fights for Aboriginal women’s rights in their communities. A number of YWCA women nominated the event as their stand out experience of CSW59, and we hope in future years, to co-host a similar event with the Australian Government “on the inside” at the UN.

Sharing knowledge and creating new ideas is another goal of the YWCA’s participation in CSW59. We were pretty excited to host a standing-room-only workshop on gender-based stereotypes and their impact on women’s leadership. Showcasing YWCA’s work around the world, we heard from amazing speakers including women from Haiti and Scotland, and left the room with new strategies on how to challenge mainstream representations of gender that hold women back.

CSW59 presented a number of challenges, most particularly the pre-negotiation of the Political Declaration which shut out civil society, we were pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the global debates on gender equality in the SDGs and we look forward to critical evaluation of the success of these negotiations and the role of the the Commission in future years to hold governments accountable for their implementation.

“Australia believes that a strong civil society presence at international forums such as CSW is vital, including to its decision-making, to ensure that gender equality and women’s advancement remain at the forefront of international policy discussions.”

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women,
Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash,
Australia’s Country Statement, March 2015
The Commission is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and is the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women.

The Commission takes place annually to evaluate progress on gender equality and to identify critical and emerging issues and challenges. Importantly, each year the Commission aims to establish a set of agreed global standards and formulate recommendations for governments, inter-governmental organisations (including the UN system) and civil society to promote gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide.

More information on the functions and history of the Commission can be found at: www.unwomen.org/en/csw.

Commission Membership
The Commission has 45 member countries. Members are elected for four-year terms based on equitable geographical distribution (13 members from Africa; 11 from Asia; nine from Latin America and the Caribbean; eight from Western Europe and other States; and four from Eastern Europe).

Australia’s involvement in the Commission
Australia was one of the 15 founding members of the Commission and has served as a member five times. Australia last served from 1993 to 1996.

Although Australia is not currently a member, its participation at the Commission each year enables Australia to contribute to international negotiation on key issues affecting women and discussion on policy goals. The Australian Government sends a delegation to the Commission each year and is particularly active in negotiating Agreed Conclusions in accordance with Australia’s policy positions.

Non-government representatives have been included as part of the Australian delegation to the Commission annually since 1999. In 2010, Australia commenced providing funding to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to support participation in the Commission by representatives from the Pacific Island countries.

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash with Ms Betty Naisenya Loljosoi, Alternative Rights of Passage (Against Female Genital Mutilation) advocate.

Daily debrief with Australian civil society representatives attending CSW59.
ANNEX A
Information on the Commission

Background
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Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
The Beijing Declaration is an international plan for achieving gender equality for women that was agreed at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in September 1995. The aim of the agreement is to remove obstacles preventing the active participation of women in all areas of public and private life and establish shared responsibility between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the community to build a sustainable, just and developed society.

The Beijing Declaration is a statement of the global recognition of women’s unequal status and provides guidelines for actions on the part of governments, the UN system, national human rights institutions and civil society.

Under the Beijing Declaration, States are committed to focusing efforts in achieving progress on the 12 Critical Areas of Concern that are considered the main obstacles to gender equality.

Beijing Platform for Action’s 12 Critical Areas of Concern

1. The burden of poverty on women
2. Education and training
3. Health care and related services
4. Violence against women
5. Effects of armed conflict
6. Productive activities and access to resources (economic security)
7. Power and decision-making (leadership)
8. Institutional mechanisms
9. Human rights
10. Stereotyping of women, especially in the media
11. Natural resources and the environment
12. Discrimination against and violation of the rights of girls
The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Review Process

The United Nations General Assembly mandated the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women to regularly review progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and to develop its role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities.

Every five years, states are called upon to review progress made against the Beijing Declaration, in particular noting any achievements and challenges in implementing progress on the 12 Critical Areas of Concern.

Review years are critical times for assessing progress towards implementation of the Beijing Declaration internationally and determining the way ahead toward the goal of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The Beijing Declaration has been reviewed on three previous occasions. Australia has been actively involved in all three reviews.

Beijing +5

In June 2000, the UN General Assembly called for a special session, Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century (Beijing +5). This was held in the UN Headquarters in New York from 5–9 June 2000.

This meeting adopted a Political Declaration and outcome document entitled “Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”. This document recognised that the goals set and commitments made in the Beijing Declaration had not been fully achieved and implemented. It urged further actions at the local, national, regional and international levels to accelerate the Beijing Declaration and to ensure full realisation of commitments.

The UN Division for the Advancement of Women (now part of UN Women) developed a questionnaire as part of the national review process, which Australia participated in.

Beijing +10

The 10-year Review and Appraisal of Beijing Declaration took place during CSW49 (March 2005). The meeting focused on two thematic issues:

- review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the outcome documents from Beijing +5; and
- challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls.

The Outcomes Document was adopted by the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly. The review and appraisal by CSW49 focused on implementation at the national level to identify achievements, gaps and challenges and provided an indication of areas where actions and initiatives within the Beijing Declaration and Beijing +5 are most urgent.

The UN Division for the Advancement of Women developed a questionnaire as part of the national review process, which Australia took part in. Australian NGOs also put together a shadow report that later fed into an Asia Pacific Report. Both reports were used to lobby governments as they developed the key text in the Final Outcomes Report.
Beijing +15

The 15-year Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Declaration took place during CSW54 (March 2010). Emphasis was placed on the sharing of experience and good practices, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the MDGs.

National and regional review processes fed into the global review process. Australia and other Member States completed questionnaires. Regional review reports were also prepared and each of the five UN Regional Commissions organised regional intergovernmental meetings.

Beijing +20

The Office for Women submitted Australia’s Beijing +20 review report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration to UN Women and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in August 2014. The report covers key achievements and progress on each of the Beijing Declarations’ 12 Critical Areas of Concern, as well as emerging priorities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in Australia.

The Office for Women also responded to the Beijing +20 regional survey in May 2014 on behalf of the Australian Government. Both documents included input from across government and were endorsed by the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women.

Member States’ national reports and survey responses informed a series of regional meetings with the subsequent outcomes documents from these meetings forming the basis for discussion during the global review, the results of which were discussed during CSW59.
# ANNEX C
## Minister and Ambassador’s Programmes as Complete

### SUNDAY 8 MARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08.30–10.00</td>
<td><strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> International Women’s Day – World YWCA Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.30–17.00</td>
<td><strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> Attended UN Women International Women's Day march for gender equality and women's rights</td>
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### MONDAY 9 MARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07.50–08.30</td>
<td><strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> Daily delegation briefing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.00–09.30</td>
<td><strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> Met with Ms Helen Clark, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00–11.00</td>
<td><strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> Attended opening session of 59th Commission of the Status of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15–11.45</td>
<td><strong>Minister:</strong> Met with H.E Mr Vinjay Sheel Oberoi, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Women and Child Development, India</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12.00–12.30   | **Minister:** Met with H.EMs Xiuyan Song, Vice-Director National Working Committee on Children and Women Under the State Council, Vice-President and First Member of Secretariat of the All-China Women’s Federation  
**Ambassador:** Participated in the ‘Preventing and responding to violence against women’ hosted by The Lancet |
| 13.15–14.45   | **Minister:** Hosted Pacific Roundtable Lunch (with New Zealand and Palau) attended by Pacific Islands Country Heads of Delegation  
**Ambassador:** Participated in the Pacific Roundtable Lunch |
| 15.00–16.00   | **Minister:** Participated in the ‘Women in Political Leadership’ side event  
**Ambassador:** Attended the 'Women in Political Leadership' Side Event |
| 16.15–16.55   | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms Zainab Hawa Bangura |
| 17.15–17.45   | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with Dr Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA |
### MONDAY 9 MARCH (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.00–18.40</td>
<td><strong>Minister:</strong> Attended CSW59 Reception hosted by Mayor of the City of New York, Mr Bill De Blasio and the First Lady, Ms Chirlane McCray</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 19.00–19.30 | **Minister:** Attended Equal Futures Reception co-hosted by Ambassador for Women and Girls, and United States Ambassador at Large for Global Women’s Issues, the Hon. Catherine Russell  
**Ambassador:** Co-hosted the Equal Futures Reception with US Ambassador at Large for Global Women’s Issues, The Hon Catherine Russell |

### TUESDAY 10 MARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07.30–08.30</td>
<td><strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> Daily delegation briefing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.00–09.30</td>
<td><strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> Met with H.E Ms Hee Jung Kim, Minister of Gender Equality and Family, Republic of Korea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10.00–11.30 | **Minister:** Participated in CSW59 Ministerial Roundtable A: Making the economy work for women and girls  
**Ambassador:** Attended CSW59 Ministerial Roundtable A: Making the economy work for women and girls |
| 10.30–11.20 | **Ambassador:** Attended the ‘Saving Lives, Protecting Futures: And Every Woman Every Child High-Level Event’ hosted by the UN Secretary General |
| 11.30–12.45 | **Minister and Ambassador:** Participated in High-level side-event on Equal Nationality Rights |
| 12.50–13.10 | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with Women Deliver CEO, Ms Katja Iversen and President and Co-Founder, Ms Jill Sheffield |
| 13.15–14.30 | **Minister:** Chaired ‘Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls in the Digital and Technological Age’ side-event  
**Ambassador:** Participated in ‘Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls in the Digital and Technological Age’ |
<p>| 15.00–15.30 | <strong>Minister:</strong> Met with H.E Takashi Uto, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan |
| 15.00–16.15 | <strong>Ambassador:</strong> Participated in the ‘Advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities: Reports from the frontline’ side event |
| 15.30–16.00 | <strong>Minister:</strong> Meet with Mr Brattsker, State Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway |
| 16.15–16.40 | <strong>Ambassador:</strong> Met with Mary Ellen Iskandarian, Women’s World Banking |
| 17.00–17.30 | <strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> Meet with Baroness Northover, Parliamentary Undersecretary for State for International Development, United Kingdom |
| 19.30–22.30 | <strong>Ambassador:</strong> Attended the UN Women High-Level commemoration of Beijing +20 reception |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<td>07.00–07.50</td>
<td><strong>Minister and Ambassador:</strong> Daily delegation briefing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.15–09.45</td>
<td><strong>Minister:</strong> Attended High level breakfast meeting ‘Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action especially in the post-2015 context: A UN System Response’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.45–9.30</td>
<td><strong>Ambassador:</strong> Met with Ms Hasina Safi, Director of the Afghan Women Network (AWN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10.00–10.40  | **Minister:** Delivered Australia’s national statement at CSW  
**Ambassador:** Attended the CSW General Session during the delivery of Australia’s national statement |
| 11.00–11.15  | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with H.E Ms Patricia Licuanan, Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education, Philippines              |
| 11.20–11.45  | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with H.E Dr Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women’s Affairs, Cambodia                                        |
| 12.30–13.00  | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with Ms Louise Upston, Minister for Women’s Affairs, New Zealand                                           |
| 13.15–14.30  | **Ambassador:** Provided an address at the ‘Pacific Women Rising! Progress towards achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Pacific’ Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island Forum side event |
| 13.15–14.45  | **Minister:** Participated in ‘Prevention to Response: Addressing the continuum of violence against women’                                 |
| 14.50–15.00  | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Rashida Manjoo                                          |
| 15.30–15.50  | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women                                               |
| 16.15–16.40  | **Minister and Ambassador:** Met with Ms Kellie Leitch, Minister for Labour and the Status of Women, Canada                                  |
| 16.45–18.00  | **Minister:** Attended ‘Girls at the Centre – Roundtable discussion on the importance of girls in ending violence against girls and women and meeting broader development challenges’  
**Ambassador:** Participated in the ‘Girls at the Centre: Roundtable discussion on the importance of girls in ending violence against girls and women and meeting broader development challenges’ |
| 18.20–19.30  | **Minister:** Co-hosted reception for Australia’s CSW NGO representatives  
**Ambassador:** Attended the reception for Australia’s CSW NGO representatives |
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<tr>
<td>10.00–10.30</td>
<td><strong>Ambassador:</strong> Met with H.E Mme Bineta Diop, African Union Commission Chairperson's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30–11.00</td>
<td><strong>Minister:</strong> Participated in 'Working with men and boys – A critical dialogue'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.40–11.10</td>
<td><strong>Ambassador:</strong> Met with Mme Marie-Josee Bonne, Special Advisor on Social Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs, Community Development and Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.15–11.30</td>
<td><strong>Ambassador:</strong> Met with Louise Allen, Executive Coordinator, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30–12.45</td>
<td><strong>Ambassador:</strong> Delivered an address at the Australian-hosted side event 'Linking Arms Control and the WPS Agendas'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.15–14.30</td>
<td><strong>Minister:</strong> Chaired 'Increasing women's workforce participation: Barriers and solutions from the G20 and beyond'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.15–14.30</td>
<td><strong>Ambassador:</strong> Attended luncheon in honour of the Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award hosted by US Ambassador Cathy Russell</td>
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</table>
Madam Chair

It is a privilege to address the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

20 years ago the world witnessed an historic moment for gender equality and women’s empowerment - the signing of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

I pay tribute to the leaders and representatives of civil society who secured such a progressive agreement of enduring relevance.

Progress has been made - BUT many challenges remain.

It is an outrage that on this 20th anniversary we are still struggling to ensure the full recognition and realisation of human rights for women and girls.

It is time to deliver on the promises made two decades ago and ensure that half the world’s population are able to reach their full potential.

We will not achieve sustainable development without a stand-alone goal on gender equality and gender mainstreaming across all of the sustainable development goals.

Australia is determined to ensure that gender equality, women’s political and economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women’s leadership and eliminating violence against women are central in the post-2015 development agenda.
Women’s equality and the human rights of women and girls must stand at the centre of the post 2015 agenda – this is critical to achieving transformative change.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of protecting human rights and acknowledges that women and girls experience different forms of discrimination in their lives that may be a direct result of, or exacerbated by, virtue of their sex.

We have a long-standing history of commitment to the protection of human rights, including for the most vulnerable and marginalised.

Madam Chair,

During our term on the UN Security Council, Australia was a strong and consistent advocate for action to address the gender impacts of conflict.

We reaffirmed the central importance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and supported the involvement of women in all aspects of peace and security decision making and post conflict processes.

We are seeing an increasing use of violent extremism targeting women and girls.

The kidnapping, selling and systematic rape of women and children should horrify us all. It demands the international community’s response.

Australia therefore looks forward to the delivery of robust recommendations from the review of Security Council resolution 1325.

Madam Chair,

In relation to the economic empowerment of women, Australia used its Presidency of the G20 to lead discussions on women’s participation in the workforce as central to driving economic growth.

I am delighted that under Australia’s presidency the G20 leaders agreed to reduce the gap in participation rates between men and women in G20 countries by 25 per cent by 2025.

Australia is also strongly committed to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through its aid program.

The Australian government has set a target requiring that at least 80 per cent of aid investments, regardless of their objectives, will effectively address gender issues in their implementation.

Madam Chair,

Australia recognises that despite ongoing international, regional and national efforts, the advancement of women and girls is greatly inhibited by the prevalence of gender based violence.
This is a social scourge from which no nation is immune, including Australia.

The Australian Government has a zero tolerance national policy platform to address all forms of violence against women and children.

Violence against women and girls exists in many forms, including cultural and religious practices. I am taking firm action against the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Australia.

The Australian Government is also determined to eradicate child, early and forced marriage.

Madam Chair,

We believe that the equal participation of men is what is needed to achieve a future in which there is true gender equality. Men must take the message of gender equality to other men and ultimately turn sentiment into action.

I am delighted to be joined by Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls. The Ambassador works closely with governments, international organisations and civil society to end violence against women and girls and to promote their participation in leadership and the economy. Australia sees value in expanding the ranks of Ambassadors for Gender Equality among other member states.

Madam Chair,

Australia believes that a strong civil society presence at international forums such as CSW is vital, including to its decision-making, to ensure that gender equality and women’s advancement remain at the forefront of international policy discussions.

We encourage all member states to work closely with their national human rights institutions and with civil society, academia and the private sector to support the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is an achievable goal.

Australia is unwavering in our commitment to this.
Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-ninth session
9–20 March 2015
Item 3 of the provisional agenda**

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Draft resolution submitted by the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women on the basis of informal consultations

Political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women

The Commission on the Status of Women

Adopts the political declaration annexed to the present resolution.
Political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women

We, the Ministers and representatives of Governments,

Having gathered at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, to undertake a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action3 and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,4 including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the realization of women’s and girls’ full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout their life cycle, as well as to ensure the acceleration of the implementation of the Platform for Action and to use opportunities, in the post-2015 development agenda, for the integration of a gender perspective into economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and with a commitment to ensuring the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the preparations for and the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to all the major United Nations conferences and summits in the development, economic, social, environmental, humanitarian and related fields so that they effectively contribute to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls,

13. Reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action1 the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly2 and the declarations of the Commission on the Status of Women on the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women;5

14. Recognize that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfillment of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women6 are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their human rights, and call upon States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto;7

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3 Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.
4 General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.
7 Ibid., vol. 2131, No. 20378.
15. **Welcome** the progress made towards the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action through concerted policy action at the national, regional and global levels, also welcome the review activities undertaken by Governments in the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, noting the contributions of all other relevant stakeholders and the review outcomes, and look forward to the global leaders’ meeting on gender equality and women’s empowerment to be held on 26 September 2015;

16. **Express concern** that progress has been slow and uneven, that major gaps remain and that obstacles, including, inter alia, structural barriers, persist in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, and recognize that 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, no country has fully achieved equality and empowerment for women and girls, that significant levels of inequality between women and men and girls and boys persist globally, and that many women and girls experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability and marginalization throughout their life cycle;

17. **Recognize** that new challenges have emerged, and reaffirm our political will and firmly commit to tackle the challenges and remaining implementation gaps in all 12 critical areas of concern, namely, women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment, and the girl child;

18. **Pledge** to take further concrete action to ensure the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including through strengthened implementation of laws, policies, strategies and programme activities for all women and girls; strengthened and increased support for institutional mechanisms for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels; the transformation of discriminatory norms and gender stereotypes and the promotion of social norms and practices that recognize the positive role and contribution of women and eliminate discrimination against women and girls; significantly increased investment to close resource gaps, including through the mobilization of financial resources from all sources, including domestic resource mobilization and allocation and increased priority on gender equality and the empowerment of women in official development assistance to build on progress achieved and ensure that official development assistance is used effectively to contribute to the implementation of the Platform for Action; strengthened accountability for the implementation of existing commitments; and enhanced capacity-building, data collection, monitoring and evaluation, and access to and use of information and communications technologies;
19. *Emphasize* that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential for achieving the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and for tackling the critical remaining challenges through a transformative and comprehensive approach in the post-2015 development agenda, including through the sustainable development goal on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, as proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals in its report,8 which shall be the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing that other inputs will also be considered, in the intergovernmental negotiation process at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly,9 and also through the integration of a gender perspective into the post-2015 development agenda;

20. *Reaffirm* the primary responsibility of the Commission on the Status of Women for the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and recall the follow-up work of the Commission in that regard, and also reaffirm its catalytic role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, on the basis of the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session, and in promoting and monitoring gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system;

21. *Recognize* the important role of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and the central role it is playing in supporting Member States and in coordinating the United Nations system and in mobilizing civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, at all levels, in support of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and call upon UN-Women and the United Nations system to continue to support the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its review and appraisal at the international, regional, national and local levels, including through systematic gender mainstreaming, the mobilization of resources to deliver results and the monitoring of progress with data and robust accountability systems;

22. *Welcome* the contributions made by civil society, including nongovernmental organizations and women’s and community-based organizations, to the implementation of the Platform for Action, and pledge to continue supporting, at the local, national, regional and global levels, civil society engaged in the advancement and promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including by promoting a safe and enabling environment for civil society;

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9 See General Assembly resolution 68/309.
23. **Recognize** the importance of the full engagement of men and boys for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and commit to taking measures to fully engage men and boys in efforts to achieve the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;

24. **Commit** to engaging all stakeholders for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and call upon them to intensify their efforts in this regard;

25. **Also commit** to using all opportunities and processes in 2015 and beyond to accelerate and achieve the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in order to achieve concrete results in each review cycle, and strive for the full realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women by 2030.