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65th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

15 March 2021

Statement by H.E. Senator The Hon. Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women of Australia, on behalf of MIKTA countries

I have the honour to submit this statement on behalf of the MIKTA countries –Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia – on the occasion of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

MIKTA countries are strong supporters of the rules-based international system, global good governance, and the promotion and protection of human rights. The achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is central to this collective ethos and is a core priority for MIKTA.

We are committed to accelerated implementation of the important framework instruments, and the outcomes of their reviews, including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action. This includes removing all obstacles to the full, equal and meaningful participation of all women and girls in all levels of decision-making and public life, as well as eliminating violence in all its forms.

The full realization of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls is essential to realizing equality for all. In turn, achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is critical to achieving peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

At this meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, we reflect on the gains made towards gender equality, development and peace for all women and girls everywhere, recognizing the important contributions by women's organizations and civil society in this endeavour.

We also recognise the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which are disproportionately borne by women and girls, and are eroding hard-won gains in progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. We have a choice. We can build back better, redressing these structural inequalities through gender-responsive approaches to the pandemic. We can do so together.

Pre-existing inequalities have deepened, vulnerabilities have been amplified and barriers compounded. The incidence of violence against women and girls has increased. Women and girls have also experienced increased challenges accessing essential services, health care services, education and quality work. We urge Member States to join us in restoring these services.

Women face disadvantages in the labour force too, including disparity in rates of employment participation and wages. Women and girls bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid labour and care work. Reversing these disparities has the potential to lift all Member States' economic development.

In this global context, we welcome the themes of this year's session of the Commission. We affirm our commitment to ensuring the leadership and full, equal and meaningful participation of all women and girls in all aspects of decision-making, in public and political life, including in peace processes, including by tackling the root causes of inequality. We look forward with all Member States to supporting this call in the Secretary General's report this year.

Gender equality must not only be at the heart of the policies and actions driving post-COVID-19 recovery, but all women and girls must be represented in the decision-making bodies responsible for developing those policies and actions.

We also recognise that women and girls are disproportionately affected by human rights violations and arising from structural and societal inequalities, the impacts of poverty, and limited access to justice. Violence against women and girls is a major impediment to achieving gender equality and we call on all Member States to strongly support efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls.

We are committed to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, both collectively, and in our own countries and regions, together with all stakeholders including civil society organizations, and will continue to work to ensure women's and girls' human rights are inalienable, integral and indivisible. It is time to translate statements and commitments into tangible action, and to work together to deliver meaningful and measurable achievements. MIKTA countries will strive to ensure that women and girls are empowered with further opportunities to reshape our societies in a more inclusive and sustainable manner.

We look forward to working with other Member States as we progress our common goal of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.