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Agenda Item 6:/Consideration of UPR reports/Canada
Speaker: Shawna Finnegan

Thank you Mr. President,

The Association for Progressive Communications welcomes Canada's acceptance of recommendations to expand measures to address violence against Indigenous women and girls, and ensure access to justice, improving the response of law enforcement and justice systems.¹

Despite systemic violence against Indigenous women in the country, individual cases are often given low priority by local authorities and media. A 2006 report² indicated significant disparities in how local police and media respond to reports of missing Indigenous women when compared to non-Indigenous women. In response, Indigenous groups and allies have turned to the internet and social media to raise awareness of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and communicate directly with police and media to address disparity in resources deployed, in order to protect and bring justice to victims.

The outcome document of the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women recommended States and other actors to "[s]upport the development and use of information and communication technology and social media as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls, including access to information on the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls".³

As part of its strategy to address violence against indigenous women, we call on Canada to work with communities, particularly in rural areas and on reservations, to improve meaningful access to the Internet.

In May 2013, Canada's Privacy Commissioner confirmed that the government had unlawfully spied on the executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Cindy Blackstock, after her organisation filed a human rights complaint over funding of child services on reserves.⁴ As the Internet becomes increasingly important for democratic participation and protection of human rights, Canada must ensure protection of the right to privacy for Indigenous groups, and all Canadians.

We call on Canada to evaluate its policies and practices on communications surveillance to ensure that they are in accordance with international human rights standards.

Thank you.

1 http://www.upr-info.org/IMG/pdf/a_hrc_24_11_add.1_e.pdf para 37

2 Madison, L.M. 2006. Immediacy, Where Is It For Aboriginal Women Who Are Reported Missing?

3 <http://www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/agreed-conclusions-csw-57th-include-violence-against-women-and-ict>

4 <http://aptn.ca/pages/news/files/2013/05/privacyreport.pdf>