

Pan African Union for Science and Technology

UPR - Australia

Mr. President,

Australia has a system of government based on the liberal democratic tradition, which embraces religious tolerance and freedom of speech and association. The country is one of the most developed economies of the world with all round growth. Australia is party to a number of international treaties that protect the right to freedom of religion or belief and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion. These rights have been further fleshed out in a range of documents and cases.

The country showed impressive economic growth. Australian GDP expanded 0.9 percent in the September quarter of 2015, as compared to an upwardly revised 0.3 percent growth in the previous quarter and above market consensus. Positive contributions from net exports and final consumption expenditure offset a decline in investment. Australia's economy is dominated by its services sector, yet its economic success is based on abundance of agricultural and mineral resources. Australia's comparative advantage in the export of primary products is a reflection of the natural wealth of the Australian continent and its small domestic market. The country is a major regional financial centre and a vital component of the global financial system.

Australia's HDI value for 2014 is 0.935— which puts the country in the very high human development category— positioning it at 2 out of 188 countries and territories. Between 1990 and 2014, Australia's HDI value increased from 0.865 to 0.935, an increase of 8.1 per cent or an average annual increase of about 0.32 per cent.

Women enjoy an equal position in Australian society and gender disparities are reducing because of government

measures. Many women have now achieved higher positions within politics, the professions and even business in Australia. It is no longer assumed that these opportunities are unavailable to women and far fewer areas of work are considered 'men's jobs' these days. In addition, much legislation has been put in place that aims to create equal opportunities for women in the workplace, such as fair pay, childcare, anti-discrimination and laws against sexual harassment. Women have slowly entered politics since being granted the vote and the right to stand for election. Some have even attained high positions as premiers, cabinet ministers and governor. Regarding rights of women, an area of health and safety for women that has changed since the 1960s is the area of reproductive choice. There is not only greater access to contraception and abortion these days but also greater public information about them. This makes it easier for women to live independent lives without having to abandon their work, study or other aspects of life in the event of falling pregnant.

Australia is second only to Norway, according to the annual UN Human Development Report which assessed economic, education and life-expectancy data.