

## Human Rights Council

### Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women

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#### Mr Paul Dziatkowicz, Adviser, Delegation of Australia

- Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur, Dr Yakin Erturk for her report on the intersections between culture and violence against women. We strongly agree that custom, religion and/or tradition should never be invoked to justify or condone any act of violence, including against women.
- Australia's own efforts to tackle the social and cultural attitudes that underpin gender-based violence in Australia may be of interest to the Special Rapporteur in her further work, and in translating the principles and observations outlined in her report into concrete recommendations to assist States in tackling this complex issue.
- We have taken a proactive approach domestically, for example by allocating A\$ 75.7 million for the period 2005-2009 on a women's safety agenda. The agenda includes a national multimedia community awareness campaign, increased funding for research and a follow-up survey on women's experiences of violence.
- We consider that violence against women must be addressed openly and directly, in order to be dealt with effectively. For this reason, we have been active in openly dealing with sensitive issues, which often have a strong cultural underpinning, such as partner-violence, gender-based violence in indigenous communities and violence against women with disabilities.
- Australia has also been active in addressing violence against women in the Asia-Pacific region. We provide assistance to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, which has been effective in tackling gender-based violence and raising the status of women. Australia also assists the Vanuatu Women's Centre in raising awareness of gender-based violence and in addressing its causes. In both instances the intersection between culture and violence is a relevant and potent factor which requires careful management.
- We would be interested in hearing whether the Special Rapporteur has had any opportunity to assess violence against women in the Asia-Pacific, or whether you may intend to do so in the future.
- Finally, Australia considers that to tackle effectively the social and cultural attitudes that underpin violence against women, men and boys must be included in the process. We would encourage the Special Rapporteur to continue to include this focus in her ongoing work.