06 February 2012

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

via email: ccharters@ohchr.org

Dear High Commissioner

Thank you for accepting these statements from the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples to the Expert Mechanism’s study into the role of languages and culture in the protection and promotion of the rights and identity of Indigenous peoples.

Congress has been established to be a national leader and advocate for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our statements have been submitted to the Australian Government’s recent inquiry into Language Learning in Indigenous Communities and Proposal to Develop a National Cultural Policy. Our recommendations are focused on improving the Australian Government’s role in the growth and protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s culture and languages.

Congress supports the Expert Mechanism’s study, recognising the unique status and diversity of First Peoples and the obligations of governments to support their cultural rights under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Congress would welcome future opportunities to work with the Expert Mechanism on matters of language and culture, as areas of fundamental importance to the wellbeing of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Please contact Ms Leigh McLaughlin, Director of Policy on (02) 8070 3109 or at leigh.mclaughlin@nationalcongress.com.au if you require any further information on these matters.

Sincerely

Mr Lindon Coombes
CEO