

UNITED NATIONS



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AND
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OF THE WORLD'S INDIGNEOUS PEOPLE

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Statement to the third committee
Agenda item "indigenous issues"

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Mr. Chairman,
Professor James Anaya, Special Rapporteur
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Coordinator of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, I am pleased to address this Committee today.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Member States that have generously contributed to the Trust Fund for the Second Decade. The activities supported by the Fund are vital for implementing the mandate of the Permanent Forum, supporting indigenous initiatives through the small grants programme, and the goal and objectives of the Second Decade.

A recent independent evaluation of the Small Grants Programme found that it has effectively contributed to the goals and objectives of the Second Decade. More specifically, the evaluation found that the policy impact has been made mainly at local level, where they matter the most. The impact has been substantial and significant, especially given the very limited funds and the short implementation time of the projects. The programme also has increased awareness of indigenous peoples' rights and strengthened indigenous peoples' organizations. These positive factors will contribute to reaching the 'critical mass' that is necessary for upstream, sustained policy changes.

We have been encouraged by these findings, and hope that we can count on your generous contributions to continue and expand this important and effective work.

Distinguished delegates,

I will now highlight some recent developments for indigenous youth, indigenous persons with disabilities and indigenous women.

The Permanent Forum's Expert Group Meeting held in January this year focused on the theme "Indigenous youth: identity, challenges and hope". There are approximately 67 million indigenous youth globally. Indigenous youth lag behind their peers in both educational opportunities and achievements. They lack equal access to health care services. Indigenous youth experience higher unemployment rates and have lower incomes compared to their peers. When uprooted from their communities and prevented from using their own languages, their identity and cultures are threatened. Indigenous youth want to play a more significant role in decision-making within their communities, in national governance institutions, and at the international level. The situation of indigenous youth demands our attention. It should be a priority for all of us.

Indigenous persons with disabilities are participating in all our events including the annual sessions of the Permanent Forum. Just a few weeks ago, at the High-level meeting of the General Assembly on disabilities and development, indigenous persons with disabilities voiced their concerns over the double-discrimination that they suffer, based on their disability and their indigenous identity. We must focus more attention on indigenous peoples with disabilities, and address their concerns and the conditions they face.

Indigenous women are also voicing their concerns. Since its first session, the Permanent Forum has paid special attention to indigenous women. Indigenous women often face triple-discrimination on the basis of their indigenous identity, gender and economic status. They can face discrimination both within the indigenous community, as well as within the broader community. Indigenous women are a powerful and compelling voice in the indigenous rights movement. They work to promote conditions of equality while continuing to maintain and transmit indigenous cultures and values.

A major success was the adoption of Resolution 56/4 Indigenous women: key actors in poverty and hunger eradication (E/CN.6/2012/16) at the 56th Commission on the Status of Women. This landmark achievement recognizes the contribution of indigenous women and their traditional knowledge to development and poverty eradication. We very much appreciate the support of Member States and their efforts to implement this resolution.

Distinguished delegates,

Just a few months ago, on 9 August, we celebrated the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples with the theme "building alliances: Honouring treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements". The interactive dialogue highlighted the importance of building alliances based on mutual understanding, respect and cooperation. It is vital that Member States take concrete steps to address the challenges facing indigenous peoples in terms of honouring treaties, agreements and constructive arrangements as key elements to advance sustainable peace, security and dignity.

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the first time ever, the United Nations will organize a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. This will take place on 22nd and 23rd September 2014. This will be an important opportunity to support and strengthen the principles embodied in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Indigenous peoples across the world have already begun to mobilize for the World Conference, with a series of preparatory meetings including a global preparatory meeting organized by the Sámi Parliament of Norway held in Alta, in June 2013. The Alta outcome document has been submitted to the Secretary General by a group of Member States, namely Bolivia, Denmark, Finland, Guatemala, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway and Peru as input to the World Conference.

The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples presents a unique opportunity to share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples. We stand ready to offer our support in making this a successful event.

The World Conference also coincides with the ongoing process to define a new development agenda beyond 2015. At the Permanent Forum's twelfth session in May this year, as well as during consultations on the Post-2015 process, indigenous peoples have pointed out that they still have a long way to go in fully realizing their rights.

The report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/67/273, assesses the progress made during the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. It also mentions the intention to contribute to ongoing efforts to define a post-2015 development agenda. We must keep indigenous peoples in mind when considering the post-2015 development agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite indigenous peoples' increased political influence, there is still room for progress. In many situations around the world, indigenous peoples are not able to participate equally in development processes. They do not fully share in the benefits of development. Further, indigenous peoples are often not adequately represented in national social, economic, and political processes that directly affect them.

These important issues facing indigenous peoples are also a priority for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. We have a responsibility to create an environment where indigenous peoples can establish their own priorities for development with culture and identity.

In my capacity as Coordinator of the Second Decade, I want to ensure that States and the UN system engage in genuine partnership with indigenous peoples. We all want the World Conference to be a real success that can improve the lives of indigenous peoples. The World Conference will be important in defining the future global policy agenda on indigenous peoples.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples constitutes the normative framework for this work.

I look forward to working closely with all of you in making sure that indigenous peoples achieve their rights as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you.
