



General Assembly Third Committee
21 October 2013
Item 66:
Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Statement delivered by
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Deputy Head of Delegation
Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations

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Mr Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, and Serbia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The respect for human rights and equality are core principles of the European Union and its global action includes combating discrimination and exclusion.

Indigenous issues are among the priorities of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, adopted in 2012. The EU reiterates its determination to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples, in particular as regards combating discrimination and exclusion. In 2013 the EU has also launched a call for proposals under the subject "Combating discrimination against indigenous peoples" under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Mr Chair,

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

We reaffirm our support to the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which marked a significant milestone for all of us – member states and indigenous peoples. As we have noted previously, the Declaration is an important instrument for promoting human rights. It also serves as a versatile tool for strengthening partnerships and cooperation between Governments and indigenous peoples and in ensuring their continued development. We encourage all States to increase their efforts to achieve the objectives of the Declaration so as to ensure full respect of the rights of indigenous peoples. While we welcome the increased international consensus on the Declaration, its full implementation remains a key to the actual enjoyment of these rights.

In line with the EU support to the Declaration, indigenous peoples' rights continue to be mainstreamed in EU development cooperation. The EU provides direct support to civil society organisations working on indigenous issues, in particular through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. The EU also provides financial support to indigenous peoples' delegates at the UN bodies and relevant activities of the International Labour Organisation.

The EU has, in the context of its Strategic Framework on Human Rights, undertaken to review and further develop EU policy relative to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with a view to the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

Mr Chair,

I would like to express the support of the EU for the three core UN mechanisms addressing indigenous issues: the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

We would particularly like to thank the Special Rapporteur James Anaya for his final report to the General Assembly in his present capacity, and for his strong and continuous commitment throughout his mandate to the improvement of the situation of indigenous peoples world-wide. We value highly the work of the Special Rapporteur throughout his term on important issues pertaining to the rights of indigenous peoples, as well as focused efforts to ensure coordination and synergy between the UN mechanisms addressing indigenous rights and other UN human rights mechanisms and institutions. We welcome the Special Rapporteur's work to raise awareness of the UN Declaration and strengthen its implementation.

The EU has engaged in the preparations of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. We reiterate our full support to the Conference and reaffirm our call for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and civil society. We welcome the indigenous peoples' preparatory processes for the World Conference, including the Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference held in Alta, Norway, in June 2013. We take note of the outcome document of the Alta Conference, and other contributions made by indigenous peoples, and of the HRC recommendation in its resolution 24/10 that the four themes identified in the Alta outcome document be taken into account when considering the specific themes for the round tables and

interactive panel for the World Conference. The EU will engage constructively in the World Conference discussions with a view to adopting a concise and action oriented outcome in New York in September 2014, which would provide the context for future work within the UN system and translate the international commitment to protect the rights of indigenous peoples into concrete action and changes on the ground.

We also note the importance of indigenous issues and the engagement of indigenous peoples in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr Chair,

Significant advances with regard to indigenous peoples' rights have been made during the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. We welcome the progress made in the achievement of its goal and objectives. Nevertheless, a wide gap continues to exist between the promises of the UN Declaration and the reality of its application on the ground. We urge the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to make use of the existing mechanisms to ensure that those objectives that have not yet been achieved in the second decade will be achieved within a reasonable time.

Thank you.