

STATEMENT

68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly - Third Committee



International
Labour Office

*Check against delivery
21 October 2013*

STATEMENT BY

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68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly - Third Committee

Agenda Item 28: Rights of indigenous peoples

Chair,

Indigenous and tribal peoples are among the vulnerable groups of concern to the ILO as it pursues its mission to promote social justice, internationally recognized human and labour rights and decent work.

The ILO's Director-General, on the occasion of this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (9 August), called for the international community "*to act against persistent injustices that continue to prevent indigenous peoples from living and working in dignity.*"

This year's international day theme – "Indigenous peoples building alliances: Honouring treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements" – is consistent with the ILO's work which has had a unique and decades-long experience in forging alliances and partnerships to advance the rights of indigenous peoples.

The ILO's experience is rooted in social dialogue and tripartism, keystones of our governance paradigm for promoting social justice, fair and peaceful workplace relations and decent work. The ILO believes that these are essential tools in promoting social rights for indigenous peoples.

Currently, the ILO hosts the technical secretariat of the United Nations Indigenous Peoples Partnership (UNIPP), and in collaboration with our partners Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, and with funding from the Governments of Denmark, Finland and Ireland, is fully operational in six countries: namely, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo and Nepal.

A Progress Report on UNIPP-supported projects was presented in May this year and highlights the awareness raising activities and the technical, policy and legal advice provided to support consultative mechanisms involving indigenous peoples.

UNIPP asks for your continued support for this important work so that our collective efforts can be brought to scale to further advance the rights of indigenous peoples.

Chair,

In 2014, the ILO will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), a treaty developed in cooperation with the UN system. This Convention represents a consensus reached by the ILO's tripartite constituents and calls upon Member States to build partnerships with indigenous peoples through consultation and participation in decision-making processes on matters affecting them.

As a standard setting technical agency of the UN, the ILO is encouraged by the increasing recognition that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and ILO Convention 169 are complimentary instruments whose implementation at country level are bound to be mutually reinforcing.

At the ILO's 9th European Regional Meeting held in Oslo (8-11 April 2013) to discuss increasing unemployment, job insecurity, growing inequalities and the weakening of social protection, the Chairperson stated that *"together [ILO Convention 169] with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, these two instruments provide a solid basis for concrete action towards more effectively recognising, implementing and protecting indigenous peoples rights"*.

Since this Committee last met, there have been numerous calls for wider ratification of ILO Convention 169: from indigenous peoples gathered at meetings in Nairobi, in Nuuk, in Bangkok, in Iximulew, and in Sydney, to name a few.

The ILO welcomes these calls for the wider ratification of Convention 169 – currently standing at 22 ratifications – and believes that the binding effect of the Convention, its supervisory mechanisms and national reporting systems, along with its related jurisprudence are key to effective implementation and monitoring of the UNDRIP as well as relevant national laws or policies on indigenous peoples at the country level.

In addition, wider ratification of ILO Convention 169 by other countries in Europe, Asia and Africa would provide a global dimension to the instrument and thereby support indigenous peoples' movements and relevant efforts by Governments in Latin America.

The ILO's Programme on Indigenous Peoples (PRO 169) is operational in more than twenty countries in collaboration with indigenous peoples and has fully integrated the UNDRIP into its overall strategic framework for 2013-2016. The Programmes'

publications, outreach materials and training programmes include extensive sections on the Declaration.

PRO 169 in Latin America focuses on the implementation processes of the Convention through capacity development, legal advice and awareness-raising. In Asia and Africa, two regions where legal standards for the protection of indigenous peoples' rights remain weak, the ILO is actively supporting on-going states reforms, indigenous peoples' land rights through domestic legislations, traditional occupations-based businesses by indigenous peoples themselves and dialogue on indigenous peoples and natural resources.

Chair,

Earlier this year, the ILO published a handbook for ILO tripartite constituents entitled "*Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal People Convention*" with the aim of providing workers' and employers organizations with a practical tool to better understand the relevance, scope and implications of the Convention and to foster joint implementation efforts and the strengthening of dialogue between their organizations and indigenous peoples.

The ILO has also contributed to an inter-agency study on "*Breaking the silence on violence against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women*" together with UN Women, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. The study calls for concerted action to stop such violence and reflects the fundamental importance of building alliances including among social partners and stakeholders to advance indigenous peoples' rights.

We believe the High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on indigenous peoples – the World Conference taking place in September 2014 – as well as the shaping of the Post-2015 development agenda are key opportunities to enhance partnerships and alliances with indigenous peoples in the world of work and beyond, in their quest for equal access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods.

The ILO reaffirms its commitment to working together with the international community and other key partners for the realization of indigenous peoples' rights so that they may also fully enjoy social justice and secure decent work.

Thank you.