

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**MR. LIU ZHENMIN
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS,
AND SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
TO COORDINATE FOLLOW UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES**

TO BE DELIVERED BY ASG ELLIOT HARRIS

**OPENING SESSION OF THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

New York, 16 April 2018

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to all of you.

On this occasion of the opening of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, we are reminded of the important contributions that indigenous peoples make to our world.

Whether through mitigating the effects of climate change or safeguarding our world heritage... Indigenous peoples are at the vanguard of addressing environmental challenges based on the principles of sustainability, respect for Mother Earth, and a balanced approach to people-centred development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals make explicit references to indigenous peoples. They also highlight principles that indigenous peoples have advocated for, such as clean water, sustainability and reducing inequalities.

The international community has become increasingly open to indigenous peoples. This is the right thing to do, and it is the smart thing to do.

It is right because indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision- making at all levels, so they can determine their own development priorities.

It is smart because indigenous peoples have an enormous wealth of traditional knowledge, sustainable livelihoods and holistic world views that benefit all of us. We need to listen to indigenous peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In September 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.

In 2014, the General Assembly hosted the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, a testament to the growing commitment by Member States to recognizing the rights and role of indigenous peoples in promoting peace and prosperity.

Just one year later, in 2015, we launched the system-wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Action Plan identifies concrete measures to support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Country-level implementation is critical if we are to make the UN Declaration a reality for indigenous peoples, who are among those most likely to be left behind.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I thank the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for graciously hosting the pre-sessional meeting of the Permanent Forum earlier this year, in the beautiful city of Sucre. I invite other countries to consider hosting the Forum’s future pre-sessional meetings.

The work of the Permanent Forum is important, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda. It provides a platform to highlight the situation, perspectives and priorities of indigenous peoples. It is a unique space for

dialogue and for cooperation, for Member States and indigenous peoples to work in close partnership, so that no one is left behind.

I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you.