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Opening statement of H.E. Mr. Čekuolis, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations and President of the Economic and Social Council

**Opening Ceremony of the sixth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
New York, 14 May 2007**

Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum,
Indigenous [Elders] and representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. On this occasion I would like to thank the Chairperson for inviting me to the opening ceremony of the Sixth Session of the Forum.

The Council, as the parent body of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, is pleased to witness the continuing progress of the Forum in pursuing the mandate given to it by the Council in resolution 2000/22. The Forum has played a key role in increasing the visibility of indigenous issues at the international level and has become the foremost body for dialogue between indigenous peoples, states, UN agencies and other inter-governmental organizations, including international financial institutions and civil society. On behalf of the Economic and Social Council, I would like to thank the Forum for comprehensive and constructive recommendations it has issued to the UN system and others over the course of its five sessions. I am sure that the sixth session will also result in highly relevant recommendations on the Forum's mandated areas, including the special theme of the sixth session on lands, territories and resources; the issue of implementation that you are underlining; regional issues pertaining to Asia and urban indigenous issues. I look forward to consider the report of deliberations and recommendations made during forthcoming two weeks at the substantive session of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted about the input made by the representatives of the Forum during the latest meeting among the Bureau of ECOSOC and the chairpersons of its functional commissions. Furthermore, I would like to encourage the Forum to continue its active involvement with the high-level issues that ECOSOC addresses annually so as to ensure that indigenous people's concerns are addressed throughout our work.

Using this opportunity I want to inform you about elections of new members to the Forum that were held by the Economic and Social Council recently. I am pleased to say that Forum will carry continuity of its work through some members re-elected for second term and several distinguished personalities joining the Forum for three year term starting January 2008.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On this, I invite the Forum to continue its engagement with the Millennium Development Goals, and to continue working towards the inclusion of indigenous peoples in global, national and local development processes under the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

I would like to conclude by commending the Chairperson and all the members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, indigenous representatives, Member States, and UN agencies gathered here, for your continued commitment to and partnership with indigenous peoples. Please rest assured of ECOSOC's support of your work. I wish you a very successful and productive sixth session.

Thank you for your attention.