



**Message on the occasion of the
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
9 August 2015
By UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women,
Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**

UN Women joins indigenous peoples around the world today, 9th August, in celebrating the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. This year's theme, *The Post-2015 agenda: Ensuring indigenous peoples' health and well-being*, marks the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals. We take this opportunity to restate the vital importance of ensuring that the new development agenda is transformative for indigenous women as well as for women everywhere.

The 20th anniversary review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action noted that while indigenous women had increased their voice in many key areas of influence across the globe, there is still urgent progress to be made in gaining decision-making positions. This deficit presents wide-ranging challenges including delivery of reproductive health services that take into account the cultural preferences of indigenous women, and the authority to tackle the unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality among indigenous women.

Attention to these and other issues central to health, well-being, and women thriving, will be supported by a stand-alone Goal on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the meaningful mainstreaming of gender across all other proposed Goals, including the third proposed Goal on Healthy Lives. It is clear that the post-2015 agenda must and will address the fundamental structural causes of gender inequality, including

deeply ingrained attitudes and discriminatory social norms, and the historical under-investment in expanding women's and girls' capabilities and resources.

Aspects of the situation of indigenous women exemplify both the opportunities for high-level engagement and constraints to well-being such as violence and poverty. We know that indigenous women can experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, language, religion and class, in addition to gender and that these are severely limiting factors that must be addressed. Indigenous women must have representation in order to voice their concerns and to advocate for their needs, such as proper infrastructure, safe spaces, and access to sexual and reproductive care during and after disasters and in times of conflict.

UN Women works globally to empower indigenous women and ensure that their voices are heard. Our Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean partners with Family Care International to remove barriers that prevent indigenous women living with HIV/AIDS in Ecuador and Guatemala from accessing adequate health services. In Africa and Asia, we reach out to indigenous women through interventions that secure higher incomes, better access to and control over resources, and greater security, including protection from violence.

Indigenous communities have a unique and invaluable place in our world that we must protect, foster and respect. As we celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples today, let us re-state the importance of preserving the traditional practices and rich cultures indigenous peoples bring to society and continue to learn from their good examples, for instance in sustainable environmental practices. Today, let us also celebrate the lives, cultures and unique contributions of indigenous women, and look forward to a post-2015 agenda that will ensure their enjoyment of their full human rights in a more peaceful, equal and sustainable world.