



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Indigenous peoples seek action on Africa, youth, health, education, culture and international finance at UN gathering**

UNITED NATIONS, 20 May 2013 – More than 2,000 indigenous participants from all regions of the world are expected to attend the twelfth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at UN Headquarters in New York from 20 to 31 May, where Members of the Permanent Forum will engage with indigenous peoples, UN Member States, and UN agencies.

Culture, education and health will be at the forefront of the discussions. As this is a “review year”, the Forum will put special emphasis on the implementation of previous recommendations in those areas.

“The right to culture, education and health are basic rights for indigenous peoples,” said Paul Kanyinke Sena, Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. “They are at the core of indigenous peoples’ right to life, our right to dignity and well-being.”

The focus will be on the situation of indigenous peoples in the African region. According to Mr. Sena, “the indigenous peoples of Africa face many challenges, the foremost of which is the recognition of their indigenous identity.” Other challenges include dispossession of indigenous lands, displacement, and competition for natural resources. “It is time to turn the rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into a reality around the world, especially in the African region,” said Mr. Sena.

At the session, participants will also engage in an in-depth dialogue with a number of international financial institutions, namely the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Finance Corporation in order to review the development and adoption of policies and mechanisms for the engagement and effective participation of indigenous peoples.

Discussions will also address preparations for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held in September 2014, and the ongoing definition of a post-2015 development agenda to succeed the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As every year, there will be a whole day dedicated to human rights, including dialogues with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, as well as with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other human rights mechanisms.

The two-week session is opening today, Monday, 20 May, at 11 a.m. in the General Assembly Hall, with statements by the Vice-President of the 67th session of the General Assembly, the Vice-President



United Nations



of the Economic and Social Council, and the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, preceded by a traditional welcome by the Chief of the Onondaga Nation, Todadahio Sid Hill.

### **Side Events**

Around 70 side events are expected to take place during the two-week session, organized by UN Member States, UN entities, other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum and other stakeholders. A number of events are focusing on indigenous youth and on indigenous persons with disabilities, as well as on violence against indigenous women. Several training sessions will take place, including on effective and meaningful participation in the Permanent Forum and on special procedures dealing with human rights violations. Issues related to business practices and extractive industries on indigenous lands and territories also remain in the spotlight. For a full list of side events, please see <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2013/side-events.pdf>

A cultural event with indigenous musicians and dancers from around the world -- including Azar from Algeria, Ch'uwa Yaku from Bolivia, and Silverclouds from the United States -- will take place on Tuesday evening, 21 May, starting at 6:15 p.m. in the Visitors' Lobby of the United Nations.

### **Background**

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2000. The Forum provides expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the UN System through ECOSOC; raises awareness and promotes the integration and coordination of relevant activities within the UN System; and disseminates information on indigenous issues.

The Permanent Forum is comprised of 16 independent experts, functioning in their personal capacity. ECOSOC appoints the members, eight of whom are nominated by governments and eight by indigenous organizations from the different regions of the world. The outcome of the Forum's twelfth session is expected to be a report ECOSOC, including draft decisions recommended for adoption by the Council.

For the first time, the meeting is going "PaperSmart" this year. In the interest of reducing the UN's carbon footprint, information will be available in various digital formats -- through an e-Portal -- with print-on-demand services in meetings rooms.

**Press conferences** are scheduled on 20 May, 23 May, 28 May and 30 May at 1:30 p.m. in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium at UN Headquarters. The press conferences as well as all official sessions (not side events) will be **webcast live** at [webtv.un.org](http://webtv.un.org).

**Journalists** without United Nations press accreditation, please refer to the Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit for details: <http://www.un.org/en/media/accreditation> or call +1 212-963-6934 or 212-963-6937

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**For more information** on the twelfth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, please see: <http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples.aspx>