

Follow-up to the 2014 High Level Meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

Background:

The World Conference was a high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly held on 22 and 23 September 2014 at UN Headquarters in New York. This was the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, a historic occasion for the UN signifying the increasing attention to the situation of indigenous peoples worldwide. It was organized with the active participation of indigenous peoples, Member States, UN agencies, programmes and funds as well as other partners. Approximately 1600 people - representatives of indigenous peoples from across the world, UN Member States, non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies, programmes and funds – participated at the conference.

In the outcome document of the World Conference, States reaffirm their commitment to substantive rights of indigenous peoples, including those affirmed in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. States also commit to take specific actions at the national and local levels to implement these rights through the development of legal, policy and administrative measures. In addition, several provisions of the outcome document relate specifically to the UN system.

Key elements of the outcome document:

The key elements of the outcome document are:

- Reaffirmation of prior commitments and recognition of indigenous peoples' rights included in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- New recognitions and commitments on a range of issues including:
 - Disaggregation of statistical data on indigenous peoples
 - Recognition of indigenous peoples' justice systems
 - Capacity building of indigenous youth
 - Situations of indigenous persons with disabilities
 - Empowerment of indigenous women and addressing violence against them
 - Support for indigenous peoples' occupations, traditional subsistence activities, economies, livelihoods and food security
 - Developing mechanisms for access to and repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains
 - Reducing rates of HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases, and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights
 - Recognition of the responsibility of transnational corporations and other business enterprises to respect the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
- Commitments by member states to take specific actions at the national level to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These include legislative, policy and administrative measures and national action plans or strategies.

In addition, the UN is also asked specifically to do the following, among other actions:

- Develop a system-wide action plan “to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”;
- Review the mandates of existing UN mechanisms, in particular the mandate of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with a view to modifying and improving them to more effectively promote respect for the Declaration; and
- Consider ways to enable the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in UN meetings relevant to them.

In order to assist with these tasks, the outcome document asks the Secretary-General to:

- Designate a Senior Official of the United Nations system responsibility for coordinating the system wide action plan, raising awareness of the rights of indigenous peoples at the highest possible level and increasing the coherence of the activities of the system in this regard; and
- To report to the General Assembly on implementation of the outcome document, including proposals on (a) using, modifying and improving existing UN mechanisms to achieve the ends of the Declaration; (b) enhancing a coherent system-wise approach to achieving the ends of the Declaration; and (c) enabling the participation of indigenous peoples representatives and institutions at the United Nations.

Update of UN activities in follow up to the WCIP

In October 2014, the Secretary-General designated Mr. Wu Hongbo the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs as the Senior Official responsible for coordinating the system-wide action plan; raising awareness of the rights of indigenous peoples at the highest possible level; and increasing the coherence of the UN system in this regard.

The Inter-Agency Support Group for Indigenous Issues has begun the development of the draft System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP). The Inter-Agency Support Group has established a dedicated working group that meets on a regular basis to develop the Action Plan.

The report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the 70th session of the UN General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council will benefit from the responses gathered in the questionnaires. The SG report will be presented to the ECOSOC in July 2015 and to the General Assembly at its 70th session which commences in September 2015. Given the short time frame since the World Conference, this will be a brief progress report, providing elements for further deliberations and action in the future.

UN-DESA has disseminated a questionnaire to Member States and indigenous peoples to gather their feedback on follow up to the World Conference, especially with respect to (a) using, modifying and improving existing UN mechanisms to achieve the ends of the Declaration; (b) enhancing a coherent system-wide approach to achieving the ends of the Declaration; and (c) enabling the participation of indigenous peoples representatives and institutions at the United Nations.

Inputs made by indigenous peoples as well as Member States made during the 14th session of the Permanent Forum will also feed into this process.

Questions to consider:

1. What are some of the most successful and transformative strategies and policies that resulted in clear advances for indigenous peoples' rights at the national level?
2. What are the actions Governments can take to implement the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples?
3. What are some of the challenges faced by Governments and indigenous peoples in achieving the ends of the Declaration?
4. What actions can the United Nations take to support Governments and indigenous peoples in implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?
5. How should existing United Nations mechanisms be used, modified or improved to achieve the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?
6. What are some good practices from within the UN system regarding indigenous peoples' participation that can be promoted and replicated?