

## **Overview of the Changes to take place during the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

### **Background**

In 2014, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues decided to review its own methods of work in order to become a more effective mechanism within the UN system. In order for the Permanent Forum to be more responsive to its mandate which includes economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights, there must be an examination of, and reform in the way the Forum conducts its work. The reform initiative is designed to involve all aspects of the Permanent Forum, ranging from its annual sessions, the role of the Expert Members and their inter-sessional work, the secretariat, and engagement with indigenous peoples, NGOs, UN agencies, member states and others.

The Permanent Forum has chosen to focus upon three areas for reform:

1. Expanding and strengthening the work of the independent Expert Members of the Forum;
2. Increasing the effectiveness of the secretariat of the Forum; and
3. Enhancing the various inter-sessional activities and work of the Permanent Forum Expert Members, including their relationship with UN agencies through the Inter-Agency Support Group. There is the need to ensure close coordination with the other Indigenous specific UN mechanisms (UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples; Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) to avoid duplication and where possible to seize upon opportunities to advance urgent agenda items collectively within the UN system.

### **Previous organisation of work of the annual session**

The previous organization of work during the annual sessions of the Permanent Forum included discussions on special themes or from the six mandated areas of the Forum; high-level panels on specific issues; dialogue with UN Agencies; and a regional focus. In addition, a large number of side-events are organized during the annual sessions by Governments, UN Agencies, Indigenous Peoples and others on a wide range of issues that are relevant to indigenous peoples.

### **A new way of working**

In regard to reforming the work of the annual sessions, the Forum has identified the following options to improve its methods of work:

1. Identify specific issues/themes to be explored in a more comprehensive fashion at the annual sessions. This entails advance notice to all participants by posting brief concept notes on the Permanent Forum's website and requesting participants to focus upon these issues and the corresponding questions set out in the concept notes.
2. Dividing the two-weeks of the annual session. One option is to hold open sessions for all the participants to the Permanent Forum in the first week and dedicate the second week to interactive sessions with each group, e.g. one day with member states, two days with UN agencies, funds and programmes, and two days as closed door meetings of the Forum to deliberate on its report and other urgent matters.
3. Sharpening focus on, and limiting the number of recommendations that the Permanent Forum adopts as well as limit the number of studies to be concluded by the members. This would involve creating clear and strict criteria for the adoption of recommendations. For example, they should be time bound, actionable, and with specific targets. This would streamline interventions and produce recommendations that avoid repetition and duplication. In addition, this would require a cultural change in the conduct of the session. A change in conference room dynamics also requires participants to limit their interventions and recommendations.
4. Urge indigenous peoples, member states, and interested UN agencies, NGOs, etc. to hold regional preparatory meetings (and national meetings, if possible) or thematic indigenous caucuses.

5. Explore the potential of such regional meetings to be held during times when the Permanent Forum members are in closed session in order for regional groups to dialogue and potentially reach consensus on recommendations for joint interventions (see paras 26 -29 of E.C.19/2006/10).
6. Ensuring equity in relation to indigenous peoples present at the annual session to have the opportunity to speak including the development of an advance speaker's list
7. Improve upon the ways and means that the Permanent Forum report is adopted.

### Changes for the Fifteenth Session

The Programme of Work for the fifteenth session of the Permanent Forum outlines some of the changes.

1. There will be an oral report on the **follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum's (previous) fourteenth session** on the first day of the session.
2. There will one primary agenda item, **Item 4 (Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)**.
3. The major change is the introduction of a half-day closed meeting where the Permanent Forum will hold separate **dialogues with:**
  - **Indigenous Peoples' Organizations,**
  - **UN Agencies, programmes and Fund and**
  - **Members States.**

Each of these dialogues will provide the opportunity to focus on specific issues and identify ways forward and ways the Permanent Forum members are able to address such matters.

4. The thematic panels will be conducted in a true interactive style. This requires panellists to speak for no longer than 5-10 minutes. There is no speaker's list and no interventions will be sought from the floor. Instead there will be true interaction between the panellists and the participants.
5. The theme of the Permanent Forum's fifteenth session is **Indigenous Peoples: conflict, peace and resolution**. As this is such an important topic for indigenous peoples, a whole day has been devoted to the theme. As in previous sessions, the Programme of Work also includes **Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Future Work**.
6. The biggest change will be Speakers arrangements during the plenary. The Programme of Work lists both **Speaker's Lists** and **Interactive Dialogues**.

The **Speaker's Lists** are open to all those who are registered to attend the Permanent Forum as observers. These include representative from Indigenous Peoples' Organisations, National Human Rights Institutions and Indigenous Members of Parliament. The indigenous women's caucus and the indigenous youth caucus will be able to make statements however this does not necessarily mean they will have priority over other speakers. All speakers from these categories must put their name on the advanced speaker's list. Speakers are only **allowed to speak once under an agenda item**. Speaker's List opened on the Permanent Forum's website in April 2016.

For **Interactive Dialogues**, speakers can inscribe to the speaker's list at the beginning such session simply by pressing the microphone button on their desk, or where desks have been set aside for this purpose – especially for those who do not have access to a microphone button. You may be asked your name and organization by staff assisting the Chairperson.

At the beginning of each meeting, Permanent Forum members will introduce the agenda item. They will also ask questions and make statements whenever they judge appropriate. Time constraints are considerable given the great number of observers who ask for the floor. The Chairperson will explain the procedure to follow at the beginning of each plenary session regarding the list of speakers and also sets time limits for interventions (3 to 5 minutes is the usual practice).

The order of speakers is determined by the Chair of the Permanent Forum

You need to provide 10 copies of your statement to translators (to be given to Conference Room Officer). You should also send your statement to [papersmart1@un.org](mailto:papersmart1@un.org) where it will be uploaded on website after your presentation.

We hope that you will be able to participate in a meaningful way during the fifteenth session of the UN Permanent Forum.

Thank You.