

**CHAIRPERSON OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**ADDRESS TO THE OPENING OF THE FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE  
PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**New York, 9 May 2016**

**Mr. Wu Hongbo**, Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

**Mr. Tadadahō Sid Hill**, Traditional Chief of the Onandaga Nation

**Mr. Mogens Lykketoft**, President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly

**Mr. Sve Jürgenson**, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council

**Ms. Aura Leticia Teleguario**, Minister of Labour and Social Prevention of Guatemala

**Ms. Jody Wilson-Raybould**, Minister of Justice of Canada

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished observers from Member States, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, non-governmental organizations, academia and the media, indigenous elders, indigenous sisters and brothers, indigenous youth and indigenous parliamentarians.

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you here today at this fifteenth session of the Permanent Forum.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to my colleagues, the Expert Members of the Permanent Forum for their confidence and support in electing me as the Chairperson for this session. I also acknowledge their remarkable depth of knowledge, skill, commitment and experience and thank them for their unwavering contributions in fulfilling the Permanent Forum's mandate including more effective implementation of its recommendations, especially in light of the fact that all of their work is done on a voluntary basis.

I want to acknowledge the Onondaga Nation, in particular, Tadodaho Sid Hill, the traditional Chief of the Onondaga Nation, the original inhabitants of this land and to thank them for the welcome into their beautiful territory once again.

This year the pre-session meeting for the expert members of the Forum was held in my home country Guatemala. The Permanent Forum members are especially thankful to the Government of Guatemala for hosting our pre-session meeting, which took place 11 – 14 April 2016 in Guatemala City. The pre-session meeting allowed the Members to plan for this session as well as meet with indigenous peoples, members of Parliament, representatives of the UN Country Team, and a diverse array of officials of the executive branch of the Government of Guatemala.

The special theme this year is *“Indigenous Peoples: conflict, peace and resolution.”* It is indeed an important issue for all us.

Even in peaceful societies, indigenous peoples often find themselves involved in situations that escalate to conflict mostly relating to our lands, territories and resources or our civil, political, cultural, social, and economic rights. The rapid pace of globalization and processes to identify new venues for resource exploitation has accelerated such conflicts on indigenous peoples' land.

Indigenous peoples are also increasingly experiencing armed conflicts and militarization on their lands. In nearly every region of the world, indigenous peoples are being displaced and severely impacted by violence and militarisms. In some countries, indigenous peoples have become victims of violence, massacres or even genocide due to their distinct identities.

Although women and men face common challenges from these conflicts, it is no doubt that indigenous women and children are often more vulnerable and suffer more in times of conflict. There can be no peace to these conflicts unless indigenous peoples are equal participants in any plans for peace and resolution.

In addition, we must continue to emphasize the rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the legally binding status of the UN Declaration. We must make sure that endorsing the UN Declaration publicly and internationally must also continue at home, at the domestic level. We will no longer sit by and allow lip service to be paid to the human rights of indigenous peoples.

**Let me now turn to some of the work that needs to be considered over the next two weeks.**

This afternoon, we will be moving to Conference Room 4, where we will begin our discussions on the implementation of the recommendations of the Permanent Forum.

Tomorrow (Tuesday), Wednesday morning and Thursday morning and Thursday next week will be devoted to the implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: health, education, human rights, economic and social development, environment and culture.

On Thursday afternoon there will be a closed meeting for the Permanent Forum members to have a dialogue with indigenous peoples.

On Friday morning, there will be discussions on the follow-up on the World Conference on Indigenous.

On Friday afternoon, there will be a closed meeting for Permanent Forum members to have a dialogue with United Nations Agencies, Programmes and Funds.

**This is the end of the first week.**

On Monday 16 May, there will be statements from the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Chair of the Voluntary Fund and the Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights. There will also be an interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

On Monday afternoon, there will be a closed meeting for Permanent Forum members to have a dialogue with Member States.

The theme for the fifteenth session is “*Indigenous Peoples: conflict, peace and resolution*” will be discussed all day, next Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2016. There will be two panels, one in the morning and one in the afternoon to introduce the theme followed by an interactive dialogue.

On Wednesday there is a full day on the Future work of the Permanent Forum, including issues considered by the Economic and Social Council and emerging issues.

**Despite the full agenda, there will be fun times too.**

We have a very full agenda of activities, including many side events which will take place during lunch time and evenings. I hope many of you are involved in side events. Tomorrow night (Tuesday) a cultural event and reception will take place. I hope you will support the performances of our brothers and sisters.

**These are just some of the highlights to be covered during this fifteenth session.**

Today, we honor all peoples, men and women who gave their lives for the fulfillment of the principles of the United Nations. Previous generations, our ancestors, that offered their lives for indigenous peoples, and who built the roads we walk through. I hope that their positive energies accompany us in our current and future fights for a better world.

Thank You.