

STATEMENT

BY

H.E.

**PRESIDENT OF THE 70TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

AT

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

9 May, 2016

[Please check against delivery]

**Ambassador Jürgenson, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council,
Mr Wu, Under-Secretary General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
Sra. Ana Leticia Teleguario, Ministra del Trabajo y Prevision Social in Guatemala,
Ms. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs in Canada, (as TBC)
Excellencies,
Distinguished Elders,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,
Distinguished Representatives of Indigenous Peoples,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour to address this Fifteenth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and welcome you all to the United Nations Headquarters. One of the highlights of the year at the United Nations is meeting the great number of indigenous peoples who arrive for the Permanent Forum Session. I know many of you have travelled great distances to participate in this event in order to address critical issues facing indigenous peoples in your own communities and around the world.

Nearly two years ago in September 2014, the General Assembly held a high-level plenary meeting known as the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, where Member States reaffirmed their commitment to support, respect, promote, advance and in no way diminish the rights of indigenous peoples - and to uphold the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In the outcome document of this 2014 high-level plenary meeting, Members States of the United Nations committed to consider, at the seventieth session of the General Assembly, ways to enable the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant United Nations bodies on issues affecting them, including any specific proposals made by the Secretary-General.

As the President of the General Assembly, I was called upon to conduct, within existing resources, consultations with Member States, indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions from all regions of the world, as well as existing relevant mechanisms of the United Nations, on the possible measures necessary, including procedural and institutional steps and selection criteria, to enable the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant United Nations bodies.

I was also called upon to prepare a compilation of the views presented during the consultations, including good practices within the United Nations regarding indigenous peoples' participation, which will form the basis for a draft text to be finalized and adopted by the Assembly during its seventy-first session.

In February this year, two Advisers from Member States H.E. Mr. Kai Sauer, Permanent Representative of Finland and H.E. Mrs. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Permanent Representative of Ghana, as well as two Advisers from indigenous peoples Dr. Claire Winfield Ngamihi Charters of the Pacific Region and Dr. James Anaya of the North America region were appointed to assist in conducting these consultations.

The first informal launch briefing on the process took place on 7 March 2016 where the road map of consultations was planned. These included electronic consultations in April and will be followed by the advisers compiling the responses as the basis for the first consultative meetings.

During this session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the advisers will hold two consultative meetings, on 11 May and 18 May, to take advantage of the presence of indigenous peoples' representatives during the Forum. In addition, the advisors will have bilateral meetings with regional groups of Member States, with the three UN Mechanisms on the rights of indigenous peoples, with the indigenous caucuses and other stakeholders. Based on the

inputs received through these consultations, the advisers will update the draft compilation to provide a new basis for discussions for the second consultative meeting on 18 May. Following the issuance of a further updated compilation on 27 May, the advisers plan to hold one final consultative meeting on 28 June for any additional adjustments to the document.

I call upon all indigenous peoples, the Permanent Forum, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to support this process.

The advisors are requesting your experiences, inputs and concrete suggestions amongst others on

- procedures and modalities that will make the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives meaningful and effective
- criteria for determining the eligibility of indigenous peoples' representatives for accreditation as such
- nature and membership of a body to determine the eligibility of indigenous peoples' representatives for accreditation;
- Details of the process, including the information required to be submitted to obtain accreditation as an indigenous peoples' representative.

These consultations are a historical opportunity to provide concrete suggestions on how to improve indigenous peoples' participation and voice in relevant United Nations bodies. I encourage you all to be there at the consultative meetings on 11 and 18 May and to provide concise inputs and suggestions to take this important agenda forward.

Let me now turn briefly to the theme of the 15th session of the Permanent Forum which is "Indigenous Peoples: Conflict, Peace and Resolution".

The Permanent Forum's special theme on indigenous peoples, conflict, peace and resolution comes extremely timely in a year of reflection and change within the United Nations, where new ways forward on peace and security are being considered following the recommendations from last year's three major UN peace and security reviews,.

As you know, the advancement of efforts to strengthen the role and performance of the UN's engagement in peace and security issues is one of the four priorities that I am focusing at during my time as the President of the General Assembly. So this topic is extremely important to me as well.

Coinciding with this Permanent Forum Session, I am organising a High Level Thematic Debate on UN, Peace and Security over the next two days. The purpose of this high-level event is to bring Member States and other stakeholders together to discuss how to address today's key threats to international peace and security – and how to achieve sustainable peace – internationally, regionally, nationally.

In this regard, the interactive discussions during this Permanent Forum session will contribute to a larger debate that is ongoing within the UN system – but it will be adding an important and needed perspective on the particular challenges for indigenous peoples in conflict and peace processes. Conflicts experienced by indigenous peoples are different to other conflicts. As we know already, most often they relate to indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources – or to their civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights. In many cases, large scale development activities have had negative effect on the livelihoods and identities of indigenous peoples - and these situations increasingly escalate in to conflict. Also, we are extremely concerned to see the harassment and even killings of brave human rights defenders amongst indigenous peoples, fighting for their rights to their lands and to be consulted in development processes.

Due to this urgency, I am very pleased that the Permanent Forum members took the initiative to tackle such a difficult theme for this year's session and I look forward to the outcome of the Forum's deliberations.

Let me wish you all a very successful and productive session and thank you for your attention.

Thank you
