

Opening remarks by
H.E. Mr. Sven Jürgenson
Vice President of the Economic and Social Council

at the

Fifteenth session of the
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

General Assembly Hall
United Nations Headquarters, New York
11a.m., 9 May 2016

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished representatives of Member States, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations,

Distinguished representatives of the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations,

Distinguished Elders, distinguished youth,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to address the opening of the 15th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

This is the first time that the Permanent Forum meets after the adoption of the historical 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Indigenous peoples' organisations, including the Permanent Forum, took an active role in the consultation and negotiation process towards the 2030 Agenda. The results of this strong engagement are clear in the final framework which – apart from the six direct references to indigenous peoples – to a high degree includes indigenous peoples' priorities such as equality, non-discrimination, human rights and of course protection of our mother earth. In that way, the Sustainable Development Goals are a step forward for indigenous peoples compared to the Millennium Development Goals. Especially important for indigenous peoples is the 2030 Agenda's grounding in human rights principles and standards (article 10) – and that implementation of the Agenda will take human rights into account, including of course the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

2015 was the year of important agreements - not only on the 2030 Agenda, but also the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the Climate Change Agreement that will set the international development agenda for the foreseeable future. Now, 2016 has been deemed the year of implementation. I encourage all indigenous peoples to continue to engage in this important process. I also encourage Member States to work with indigenous peoples, not only because they have the right to participate in the development process, but also because they

have extremely valuable contributions to make for all. The 2030 Agenda says this very clearly: it calls on indigenous voices in the review at national level of the implementation of the Agenda (paragraph 79) and it encourages indigenous peoples as part of “we the peoples” to get involved in realising the agenda (paragraph 52).

The 2030 Agenda also gives the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues a new and important responsibility. As a subsidiary body to ECOSOC, the Permanent Forum has an important role to play in ensuring that indigenous peoples’ issues, concerns and suggestions are heard and that they feed into the discussions of the ECOSOC on the main theme of its annual session, namely “Implementing the 2030 Agenda: moving from commitments to results” and of the High Level Political Forum, the main platform to review progress on the 2030 Agenda. As you know, “leaving no one behind” has been selected as the theme of the first High Level Political Forum after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. We therefore encourage you to guide us on how to ensure that indigenous peoples are not left behind in the 2030 Agenda: what are indigenous peoples’ specific situations, challenges, successes, contributions in our common journey towards sustainable development. You are the experts – and we count on you to bring that expertise into the discussion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure every year to see representatives from indigenous peoples assembled, together with Member State delegations at the United Nations. The theme of this year’s session echoes the very spirit of the Permanent Forum an entity which *embodies* the endeavour to peacefully address difficult and contentious issues by bringing indigenous peoples, Member States and UN agencies together in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and openness. The Permanent Forum provides a safe space to meet and through that contributes to improving the relationship between indigenous peoples and governments – and to finding solutions that can prevent conflict.

You have ahead of you two weeks of hard work and important discussions. I look forward to following the deliberations and the conclusions of the session. The recommendations emerging from these discussions will be particularly relevant for Goal 16 of the 2030 Development Agenda on peaceful and inclusive societies.

Indigenous peoples have the same right to enjoy peace, security and human rights as anyone else, although in reality they have not always enjoyed these rights.

We look forward to your recommendations and to be guided by the Permanent Forum's continued engagement and contribution to the UN Family.

Thank you