

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), Expert Group Meeting**

**International Expert Group Meeting on  
“Indigenous Youth: Identity, Challenges and Hope:  
Articles 14, 17, 21 and 25 of the United Nations Declaration  
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”**

**U.S. Statement, delivered by Laurie Shestack Phipps**

Thank you, Distinguished Chair. We wish to compliment the experts for their papers, insights, energy, and enthusiasm for the cause of indigenous youth. The United States appreciates that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes the imperative of promoting the well-being of indigenous youth. Under President Obama’s leadership, the United States has taken many actions over the past four years to promote the education of our own indigenous youth, improve their economic and social situation, and safeguard the quality of their natural world upon which their traditional spirituality is based.

A report entitled “Continuing the Progress in Tribal Communities” stems from the December 2012 White House Tribal Nations Conference in the United States and is available electronically on the Internet, at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/wh\\_tnc\\_accomplishments\\_report\\_final.pdf.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/wh_tnc_accomplishments_report_final.pdf.pdf). The report outlines U.S. domestic policies and programs that demonstrate our commitment to indigenous youth, as well as to indigenous children, families, and communities. U.S. government

activities to support indigenous youth are numerous and wide-ranging. In the area of education, examples include providing for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in tribal colleges and universities and supporting the preservation of Native languages in schools while advancing proficiency in English. On health, U.S. government-funded community health centers provided services to hundreds of thousands of American Indians and Alaskan Natives. We fund numerous substance abuse and mental health programs, including some devoted to suicide prevention. On improving conditions in communities, the President's fiscal year 2013 budget request includes \$650 million for the Indian Housing Block Grant. The Safe Indian Communities Initiative aims to prevent violent crime in tribal communities. And on environmental and cultural preservation, we have programs to introduce Native American students to careers in conservation.

If upon looking through the White House report you would like additional information on any of the programs mentioned, the U.S. Mission will be happy to direct you to the appropriate federal program officials for further discussion. In these examples, there is a common approach. The United States supports tribal governments and tribal communities in their efforts to enhance their capacity to improve economic and social conditions for their citizens through self-governance and self-determination.

Regarding our international efforts, USAID's Policy on Youth in Development recognizes young people as a driving force in global development and encourages youth participation as partners and leaders. The policy recognizes the need to carry out effective programs throughout the world that support, prepare, engage, and protect youth. In Africa USAID funds programs that address trafficking of women and girls, early marriage, and preventing and treating HIV/AIDS. Programs in Latin America focus on promoting economic opportunities and building workforce skills for vulnerable youth, as well as engaging them in sports and cultural activities.

We do not underestimate the challenge to empower indigenous youth. A sustained effort is required and ongoing collaboration from the tribal and federal systems. Partnership is crucial in our efforts to build tribal capacity.

Thank you for your attention.