

Opening Statement
by
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at the
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

29 - 31 January 2013, New York

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,
Distinguished experts and participants from the UN system, Member States, indigenous
peoples and other organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

It is pleasure to be here for the opening of the Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Youth, organized by the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The theme of “indigenous youth” was chosen by the Permanent Forum at its eleventh session last May to better address the rights and priorities of young people from indigenous communities throughout the world.

Recognizing its significance, the Secretary-General has made youth a top priority on the UN’s five-year action agenda and recently appointed Mr. Ahmad Alhindawi, as his Special Envoy on Youth to serve as a global advocate for youth. The UN system is developing a System-wide Action Plan to deepen its focus on working with and for youth and this plan will be submitted for consideration of the heads of UN entities later this spring.

With over 40 percent of the world population under age of 25, there are today about 1.2 billion youth in the world. Youth is our global asset and investing in Youth and safeguarding their interest is critical for both social and economic stability.

The last five years crisis has however compounded the challenges facing Youth, as in some countries over a quarter or even more of youth is unemployed. A large proportion of youth lives in conflict, crisis and fragility prone environment and have virtually no or limited access to education, training and employment opportunities. Youth are

discouraged, disillusioned and distrustful of institutions and leaders and have resorted to unhealthy practices.

Indigenous youth face greater challenges than their non-indigenous counterparts. For example, they face higher levels of illiteracy rates, drop out rates and other indicators and they tend to experience lower enrollment ratios, higher unemployment rates and lower incomes. Indigenous youth struggle to develop and define their identities, maintain their cultures and preserve and revitalize their languages.

Younger generation of Indigenous population can be promising for their community as their vitality and vigor is appropriately unleashed and can transform the overall indigenous community's destiny. Youth drives idealism, creativity, entrepreneurship and with appropriate support can help make the world a better place.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome all the experts coming from the seven Permanent Forum socio-cultural regions of the world. I am particularly glad to see so many youthful faces amongst our experts here. I also acknowledge the presence of the Grand Chief Edward John, the Chairperson on the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Permanent Forum Members who are here with us today. I also extend a warm welcome to Mr. Jose Carlos Morales, member of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for being here with us at this meeting.

I wish you all a successful meeting!

Now I turn to Item 1 of the Agenda which is the Election of Chairperson and Rapporteur.

Can I ask for nominations for the Chairperson? And a seconder?

Thank you for the nomination of Mr. Alvaro Pop as Chairperson.

Are there any nominations for the Rapporteur? And a seconder?

Thank you for the nomination of Ms Megan Davis as Rapporteur.

I now invite the Chairperson and the Rapporteur of this meeting to take their seats.

Thank You.