

September 2013

**International Day 2013 - Indigenous Peoples Building Alliances: Honouring Treaties, Agreements and Other Constructive Arrangements**

**24th Session of the Human Rights Council: Half-Day Panel Discussion on the World Conference 2014**

**Permanent Forum Member Activities**

*The Message Stick<sup>1</sup> highlights the activities undertaken by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) as well as its Secretariat.*



**International Day 2013 - Indigenous Peoples Building Alliances: Honouring Treaties, Agreements and Other Constructive Arrangements**



*Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, and Mr. Kanyinke Sena, Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Photo: Broddi Sigurdarson*

<sup>1</sup> A Message Stick is a traditional Australian Aboriginal method of correspondence whereby runners would deliver messages carved in symbols on a piece of wood to inform other indigenous peoples of upcoming events.

This year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (9 August) highlighted the importance of honouring agreements between States, their citizens and indigenous peoples, while emphasizing the principles of friendship, cooperation and peace.

At the commemoration at UN Headquarters, the Chair of the Permanent Forum spoke on treaties, agreements and constructive arrangements between States and indigenous peoples. Signed with former colonial powers or their successors, these remain central to indigenous peoples' rights. He cited some examples such as the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand signed between the Maori and the British, the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement between the Inuit people and Canada, and the Sámi Parliaments established in Sweden, Norway and Finland. With a particular focus on Africa, he noted an agreement for the restitution of land for the Khomani San in the Mier Reserve in South Africa, which constituted recognition and redress for centuries of marginalization. "Honouring treaties is not just about the past. It is about the present and the future. It is about revisiting and living up to past engagements in order to renew and strengthen our present and future relationships, both as peoples and nations."

In his remarks, the UN Secretary-General focused on the importance of strengthening partnerships that will help to preserve cultural vigour and traditional values while facilitating poverty eradication, social inclusion and sustainable development. "Indigenous peoples' participation in



decision-making at all levels is a must, including in the processes related to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and shaping the post-2015 development agenda.”



*Chief Oren Lyons explaining the Two Row Wampum Treaty that was made between Holland and the Haudenosaunee.  
Photo: Broddi Sigurdarson*

Attended by representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations, Member States and civil society, the event included an interactive dialogue with the Deputy Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, and Chief Oren Lyons from the Onondaga Nation.

The event was organized by the Permanent Forum Secretariat, UN Department of Public Information and the NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Please see [webtv.un.org](http://webtv.un.org) for more details of the event.

An overview of the activities, including links to relevant documents, the webcast and messages from UN agencies and others, is available here:

<http://undesadspd.org/IndigenousPeoples/InternationalDay/2013.aspx>.

### *Global Commemorations of the International Day*

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is increasingly being commemorated around the world.

Permanent Forum member, Ms. Mirna Cunningham, participated in an event commemorating the International Day in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Ms. Cunningham spoke on a panel chaired by the President of the Republic of Honduras, which focused on, inter alia, strategies to promote the development of indigenous peoples' vision, and forms of participation at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (2014). Ms. Cunningham noted among other issues that diversity does not mean fewer rights and less dignity, that peace is based on social justice and the recognition and respect of the rights of indigenous peoples.



*Photo: [www.thailand4.com](http://www.thailand4.com)*

In Chiang Mai, Thailand, the Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand teamed up with 35 indigenous networks to host the sixth indigenous peoples' festival from 7 to 9 August 2013 to celebrate the International Day.

The festival served as an opportunity for the public to be informed about indigenous peoples' rights. The focus was on concrete actions in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).





In addition to theatre performances, presentations on indigenous art, music and games, a panel discussion with Permanent Forum member Mr. Raja Devasish Roy, and others was held to discuss the regional progress of the implementation of the UNDRIP. The discussions also provided a space to exchange regional and local experiences on policy and government development plans.



*More than 200 indigenous and non-indigenous paddlers arriving at the UN Headquarters in New York Photo: Broddi Sigurdarson*

In New York, 9 August was also marked by a special event to honour the first treaty – the Two Row Wampum – concluded between Dutch immigrants and the Haudenosaunee (a confederacy of six nations, with its seat in the Onondaga nation in New York State) in 1613 with over 200 indigenous and non-indigenous paddlers arriving at the UN Headquarters in New York after having travelled down the Hudson River on canoes and on horseback.

#### **24th Session of the Human Rights Council: Half-Day Panel Discussion on the World Conference 2014**

In preparation to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in September 2014, the Human Rights Council – as part of its 24<sup>th</sup> regular session – held a half-day panel discussion. The discussion focused on the preparations and aims and goals of the World

Conference and – in particular – the participation of indigenous peoples in the process. It also provided an opportunity to discuss how human rights issues could be addressed in the context of the World Conference.

Speaking on the panel, Mr. Raja Devasish Roy, Permanent Forum Vice-Chair, provided an overview of indigenous peoples' participation in previous General Assembly events, including at Rio and Rio+5, and suggested that participants bring regional and local experiences of inclusive participation to the World Conference preparations. He introduced the concept brought forward at Rio+20 about including culture as a fourth pillar in sustainable development and to consider development with culture and identity. Mr. Roy also called for the need to respect the outcomes of regional processes, such as the Alta Outcome Document, in the preparation for the World Conference, and noted that the four themes identified in the Alta Outcome Document should guide those preparations, including at the inter-active hearing, which will take place in 2014 in New York.

Other speakers at the event included the Vice President of the Human Rights Council, a representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, John B. Henriksen (international representative of the Saami Parliament of Norway), Tania Pariona (Indigenous Global Coordinating Group - youth caucus), and Chief Wilton Littlechild (Chairperson of EMRIP).

The concept note and the full webcast of the meeting, including closed captioning and sign language interpretation, are available at <http://bit.ly/HRC24WCIP>.



### Permanent Forum Member Activities

Below is a snapshot of some of the activities Permanent Forum members have been engaged in:

#### National Congress on Discrimination and Racism “Congreso Nacional sobre Discriminación y Racismo”

As part of a "Congreso Nacional sobre Discriminación y Racismo" in Guatemala City (7 August 2013), Mr. Alvaro Pop, Permanent Forum member, presented the findings of a report entitled "Evaluación de la Declaración de las Naciones Unidas sobre los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas en Guatemala", which had been presented at the Forum's twelfth session earlier this year. Permanent Forum member, Ms. Mirna Cunningham, also attended the event.

#### REDD+ Talks: “NYC - Delivering REDD+ at Scale for Sustainable Development: Public and Private Synergies”

The UNPFII Chairperson, Mr. Kanyinke Sena attended an event entitled "REDD+ Talks: NYC - Delivering REDD+ at Scale for Sustainable Development: Public and Private Synergies" on 18 September 2013 in Bronx Zoo. The event featured several high-level speakers, including the Executive Director of UNEP, and the Minister of International Development of Norway. In a keynote statement, Mr. Sena stressed among other issues that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be used as the normative framework for the UNREDD+ initiative.

#### Special Event towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the UN General Assembly

Presenting the findings from the twelfth session of the Permanent Forum, among

other issues, Ms. Mirna Cunningham was a panelist at a special event on achieving the MDGs by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2013.

More information about the event is available here:

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/67/issues/mdgs/mdgs.shtml>.

### Akitsiraq Law Program – Summer Session

Teaching on issues related to aboriginal and constitutional law, Permanent Forum member, Ms. Dalee Sambo Dorough was invited as faculty at the Akitsiraq Law Program in Iqaluit, Nunavut. The focus of the course was to give the students an opportunity to learn how aboriginal rights and constitutional law fit into the local legal framework.



*Akitsiraq Law Program students of the 2013 Summer session with Ms. Dalee Sambo Dorough. Photo: Dalee Sambo Dorough.*

