

**Message of
H.E. JOSEPH DEISS
PRESIDENT OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
New York, 9 August 2011**

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, for the invitation be here with you today.

We come together today to commemorate the annual International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, and to reaffirm the importance of the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

On this year's International Day, we celebrate indigenous peoples' culture, identity and traditions. Indigenous symbols and designs, values and beliefs, which have been transmitted through the centuries from one generation to the next, can play a crucial role in facing the challenges of modernity. Their innovations and designs, weavings and other forms of artistic expressions form an integral part of our cultural heritage, and help us reflect on where we are today. We need to support the indigenous peoples in their struggle to protect their rights to their art, culture and identity and ensure that this is part of environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

The United Nations is deeply committed to ensuring the rights and dignity of indigenous populations. Through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007 by the General Assembly, Member States affirmed that indigenous people are free and equal to all other peoples, and that they have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination. States also recognized that native people have the right "to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties" concluded with States or their successors. And it is through advancing the rights of indigenous peoples that we can enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the State and indigenous peoples - relations based on principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith. The adoption of this Declaration was a landmark event, illustrating the world's acknowledgment of the vital contribution of indigenous people.

Recently, the General Assembly also decided to organize a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014. This event will mark the progress we have made since the first International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was celebrated in 1994. It will also be an opportunity to share perspectives and best

practices on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples, including through the pursuit of the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In preparing for the Conference, the General Assembly has invited the President of the General Assembly to conduct open-ended consultations with Member States and with representatives of indigenous peoples in the framework of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as well as with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur, in order to determine the modalities for the World Conference, including the participation of indigenous peoples in the Conference.

While these open-ended consultations will take place under a different Presidency of the General Assembly, I would encourage that all efforts be made to ensure that indigenous peoples play a central role in the Conference preparations. I would also call for equal, direct and meaningful participation by indigenous peoples in the conference itself, including its outcome. This will be essential if the international community is to arrive at a constructive result that will genuinely improve the status and conditions of indigenous peoples worldwide.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, let us renew our commitment to indigenous peoples' rights; let us reaffirm our shared will to be guided by the principles of the Declaration in our work; and let us continue to work cooperatively with indigenous peoples to make their vision and aspirations a reality.