



**Message of Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
Executive Director, UN Women
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
8 August 2014**

Today, August 8, is the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. On behalf of UN Women, I join with people around the world in commending and commemorating the achievements and struggles of indigenous peoples.

This year's theme is *Bridging the gap: implementing the rights of indigenous peoples*. This is particularly relevant to indigenous women and girls. In their struggle for equality, they have shown their diverse capacities as human rights defenders, decision makers and implementers, despite discrimination and marginalization. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues estimates that there are 370 million indigenous peoples living in more than 90 countries across the world. Imagine how much more women in all these countries could contribute if they had equal opportunities to realize their full potential.

UN Women applauds the focus on this issue, as global leaders embark on determining the sustainable development framework. We join indigenous peoples around the world in calling for the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples — the comprehensive blueprint for addressing the inequalities and discrimination that indigenous communities have faced for centuries.

In October 2013, indigenous women's organizations and individuals came together with UN Women and other partners in Lima, Peru, to adopt the *Lima Position and Plan of Action*. It calls for urgent, concerted efforts to address challenges facing indigenous women in many parts of the world: persistent violence, poverty, discrimination, racism, and limited access to services and productive resources. The Plan of Action also calls for indigenous women's full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels.

These principles and values inform UN Women's work with indigenous women and their communities around the world. We also work closely with indigenous women's organizations through our Civil Society Advisory Groups.

This celebration of the International Day is just the start of an important new epoch in progress. It is our hope that the international community will keep its promises to indigenous women and girls and take measures that fulfill their aspirations for equality, freedom, and justice.