

16 January 2014

Excellency,

We, representatives of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as well as the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 14 January 2014 to coordinate our respective mandates. Mindful of our continual cooperation with previous Presidencies of the General Assembly, we would like to draw your attention to a specific issue that raised our serious concern.

Recognizing the vital importance of the participation of Indigenous Peoples in decisions made within the United Nations system that directly affect them, the President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly nominated an indigenous representative to work hand-in-hand with a Member State representative to conduct open-ended consultations to determine the modalities for the meeting, including the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the Conference. We urge you to continue this practice with the designation of an indigenous representative along with a Member State representative, in order to finalize the preparatory consultations, keeping in mind that time is of the essence, and we further urge that you name Mr. John B. Henriksen as the indigenous representative. Mr. Henriksen was chosen by Indigenous Peoples, including indigenous women and youth, through global and regional preparatory meetings in the seven indigenous regions.

It is absolutely critical that all decisions related to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, its arrangements and the outcome document be made with the full, equal and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, as recognized in resolution A/RES/66/296, and that an indigenous representative be designated to ensure their participation.

We would like to emphasize that Indigenous Peoples have a status that is distinct from that of other non-State actors. They are not non-governmental organizations or minorities. As recognized by the United Nations system and multiple other global intergovernmental developments, they are peoples with their own cultures, histories and institutions of authority and decision-making. As explicitly affirmed in article 3 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they have the right to self-determination, which includes the right of effective participation in all decisions affecting them. Because of this unique status, designating an indigenous representative to work alongside a State representative in no way establishes a precedent for other non-State actors generally.

The World Conference is a landmark event to reinforce the United Nations' commitment to the world's Indigenous Peoples, as well as an opportunity to encourage the international community to take concrete steps to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Declaration itself being the result of an open and inclusive process of dialogue and negotiations among and between Member States and Indigenous Peoples.


H. E. Mr. John W. Ashe
President of sixty-eighth session of the
General Assembly of the United Nations
New York

We urge all Member States under your leadership as the President of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly to have the wisdom and the commitment to make the World Conference a unique event, one that is carried out in full partnership with Indigenous Peoples.

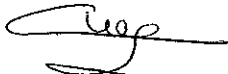
Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.



Chief Wilton Littlechild
Chairperson
Expert Mechanism on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples



James Anaya
Special Rapporteur on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples



Mariam Waller M. Aboubakrine
Member
Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues



Maria Eugenia Choque
Member
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Grand Chief Edward John
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