



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

PRESS RELEASE

## Reconciliation between States and Indigenous Peoples highlighted on International Day

(New York, 6 August) – In commemoration of the International Day of the World’s Indigenous People (9 August), an observance at UN Headquarters on **Friday, 8 August** will focus on efforts by indigenous peoples and States to foster reconciliation.

A panel discussion, titled “*Conciliation and Reconciliation between States and Indigenous Peoples,*” will include speakers Gert Rosenthal, Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations; Henri Paul Normandin, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations; and Chief Oren Lyons, spiritual leader, Onandaga Nation (*see full programme below*).

Reconciliation between indigenous peoples and States can take many forms that differ from country to country. Generally it involves recognition for past injustices, justice for victims and the healing of relationships. The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, after more than 20 years of negotiations among States and indigenous peoples with the mediation of the United Nations, is itself an historic act of reconciliation.

In a message to mark the Day, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted the Declaration, saying: “The result of more than two decades of negotiations, [the Declaration] provides a momentous opportunity for states and indigenous peoples to strengthen their relationships, promote reconciliation, and ensure that the past is not repeated.”

Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs and Coordinator of the Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People, further emphasized that “the Declaration is a manifestation of reconciliation between indigenous peoples and states – and a mechanism for carrying that reconciliation forward. Indeed, 2008 has already witnessed concrete measures towards reconciliation in several countries.”

Some recent examples of reconciliation efforts include:

- In February 2008, the Australian Government formally apologized to members of the “Stolen Generations” and their families, for the policy of forcible removal of indigenous children, which affected generations of indigenous Australians.
- In June 2008, Prime Minister Harper of Canada offered an apology to the approximately 80,000 former students of Indian residential schools still living, to their family members and their communities, for the forcible removal of children from their homes.
- In June 2008, the Government of Japan formally recognized the Ainu people as indigenous people of Northern Japan. The resolution adopted by the Parliament states that the Ainu have a distinct language, religion and culture, recognizing that Japan is not an ethnically homogenous nation.



United Nations



## PROGRAMME

Friday, 8 August, 10:00am – 1:00pm  
Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium, UN Headquarters

### Welcome Ceremony

Message from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

Message from Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang

Message from the Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz

### Hālau i Ka Wēkiu (School Upon the Summit) Cultural Performance

### Panel Discussion: Conciliation and Reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and States

*Part of the New Human Rights Dialogue Series, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

#### Panelists:

*Gert Rosenthal*, Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations

*Henri Paul Normandin*, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations  
Representative of the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

*Marcie Mersky*, Liaison Officer, United Nations Department of Political Affairs

*Chief Oren Lyons*, Faithkeeper, Turtle Clan, Onondaga Nation, Member of Grand Council of Chiefs of the Haudenosaunee

**Master of Ceremonies:** *Roberto Múcaro Borrero* (Taíno, Puerto Rico), Chairperson,  
NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

This event is organized by the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues DSPD/DESA, the NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples and the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Co-sponsored by the Tribal Link Foundation and the American Museum of Natural History.

### FILM SCREENING: THE APOLOGY

1:00 – 1:45 p.m.

A 30-minute film screening organized by the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations will follow the panel discussion.

The International Day of the World's Indigenous People is officially commemorated annually on 9 August in recognition of the first meeting of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva in 1982.

**MEDIA ARRANGEMENTS:** Journalists without UN accreditation who wish to attend the event should follow the instructions for obtaining accreditation at [www.un.org/media/accreditation](http://www.un.org/media/accreditation) For media enquiries or interviews, please contact: Renata Sivacolundhu, Department of Public Information, tel: 212 963 2932, e-mail: [mediainfo@un.org](mailto:mediainfo@un.org). For Secretariat of the Permanent Forum, please contact: Broddi Sigurdarson, tel: 917 367 2106, e-mail: [IndigenousPermanentForum@un.org](mailto:IndigenousPermanentForum@un.org)

For more information on the Day's events, please visit:

[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/news\\_internationalday2008.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/news_internationalday2008.html)

