



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

MEDIA ADVISORY

Celebration of International Day of the World's Indigenous People on 9 August at the UN

Observance to highlight urgent need to preserve indigenous cultures

In commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People on 9 August, an observance at UN Headquarters will focus on the urgent need to preserve indigenous languages, including the role of indigenous youth.

In a message to mark the Day, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs and Coordinator of the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous People, Mr. Sha Zukang, said: "We are celebrating humanity's amazing diversity and the invaluable contributions indigenous peoples continue to make at the global level that benefits everybody."

HIGHLIGHT: A panel discussion "*Honoring Indigenous Youth and Languages*" will be held. Speakers will include: Unity Run representative, Indigenous Youth 'Spirit of the Youth'; Mr. Alberto Virella, Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations and Ms. Dawn Hill (Mohawk Nation).

Moderated by Elsa Stamatopoulou, Chief, Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

WHEN: Thursday 9 August, 11.00am – 12:30pm and 2:30pm – 5:00pm

WHERE: United Nations Plaza and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium, UN Headquarters, 1st Avenue & 46th Street

BACKGROUND:

- The linguistic erosion of indigenous languages means that much of the encyclopedia of traditional indigenous knowledge that is usually passed down orally from generation to generation is in danger of being lost forever.
- Fewer and fewer languages are now being learned by children in the traditional way, from their parents and elders: in the United States, only around 11% of native languages are learned this way.
- According to UNESCO, approximately 600 languages have disappeared in the last century and they continue to disappear at a rate of one every two weeks. Currently half of the world's languages are in danger of extinction, more than 90% of which are likely to disappear before the end of this century.
- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹ recognizes "Indigenous Peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their ... languages".
- Recognizing the need to promote and protect all languages, the General Assembly has proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages.

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 For media enquiries or interviews, please contact: Renata Sivacolundhu, Department of Public Information, tel: 212.963.2932, e-mail: mediainfo@un.org. For Secretariat of the Permanent Forum, please contact: Mirian Masaquiza, tel: 917.367.6006, e-mail: IndigenousPermanentForum@un.org

¹ Adopted by the Human Rights Council in June 2006.



United Nations



PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY:

(11:00am – 12:30pm, United Nations Plaza, Visitors Entrance, UN Headquarters)

Welcome and Spiritual Ceremony

Opening song by Iroquois Youth

Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development, DESA, *Johan Schölvinck*

Message of the Secretary General, *Ban Ki-moon*

Message of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Coordinator of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, *Sha Zukang*

Message of the Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, *Victoria Tauli-Corpuz* (Igorot, Philippines)

Declaration of Indigenous Elders from the International Indigenous Elders Summit read by an Iroquois Youth and introduction of the Spirit of the Youth: Unity Run

Sacred Pipe Ceremony honoring the World's Indigenous Peoples, Youth and Sacred Sites conducted by Chief Arvol Looking Horse (Lakota)

Closing song by Iroquois Youth

(2:30 – 5:00pm, Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium, UN Headquarters)

Panel Discussion: “Honoring Indigenous Youth and Languages”

Speakers include Unity Run representative, Indigenous Youth ‘Spirit of the Youth’; Mr. Alberto Virella, Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations and Ms. Dawn Hill (Mohawk Nation). Moderated by Elsa Stamatopoulou, Chief, Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Indigenous Cultural Performance by Ayllu Sisay, a traditional dance group from Ecuador

Closing prayer by Chief Arvol Looking Horse (Lakota)

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 and the NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

For more information on the Day's events, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/>

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

