

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**MR. WU HONGBO
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS,
AND SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
TO COORDINATE FOLLOW UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES
DELIVERED BY MR. LENNI MONTIEL
ASSISTANT-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**OPENING SESSION OF THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

New York, 24 April 2017

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Honorable Elders,

Distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations,

Distinguished representatives of the United Nations system, other inter-governmental organizations and of civil society,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to all of you.

It is an honor to address the opening of the sixteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples.

This session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is of particular importance. This year we celebrate ten years since the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We have come a long way since then.

In 2014, the General Assembly of the United Nations hosted its first ever World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, a testament of the growing commitment to recognizing the rights and role of indigenous peoples in promoting peace and prosperity.

Just one year later, in 2015, we launched the system-wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Action Plan is a key outcome from the 2014 World Conference. Developed by the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, in consultation with indigenous peoples and Member States, the Action Plan identifies concrete measures to support the implementation of the Declaration. Already, at this year's session of the Permanent Forum we have received information from 17 United Nations agencies on their implementation of the Action Plan in all six action areas.

The Action Plan has brought greater focus on supporting the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the country level. Country-level implementation is critical, and is an area that indigenous peoples have prioritized, that the Permanent Forum has highlighted and that Member States have committed to making a reality. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development and other partners is facilitating and supporting policy dialogues between indigenous peoples and governments in the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Tanzania, Myanmar, Nepal and Paraguay. DESA is also supporting national processes to implement the Declaration in Namibia, Kenya, Cambodia and the Philippines.

The ILO, UNDP, UN Women, FAO and OHCHR to name just a few, are all engaged in a range of activities to promote the rights of indigenous peoples, in cooperation with many Member States. This includes support for national action plans on indigenous peoples, participation of indigenous peoples in peace negotiations and environmental processes, development of legal and policy frameworks to support realization of indigenous rights, combating violence against indigenous women, as well as promoting collective land titling and access to justice.

Indigenous peoples and Member States have requested the increased engagement of the United Nations system and we have responded. We will continue our efforts as we enter a new phase

of international development guided by the 2030 Agenda. The implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will remain a high priority. You can count on our support.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Member States that contributed to the Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues in 2016 – Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia and Finland. It is through this Trust Fund that we directly support the substantive work of the Forum and raise awareness of the situation of indigenous peoples.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Government of Canada for graciously hosting the pre-session meeting of the Permanent Forum earlier this year, and for providing Forum Members with an opportunity to gain better insight on the situation of indigenous peoples in Canada

Of course, there is also always room for improvement and this is precisely why we are gathered here at the United Nations headquarters today. We have the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a roadmap. We have the system-wide action plan to guide the UN's support. Yet, Indigenous peoples continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty, discrimination and poor healthcare. Their collective and individual rights are too often denied. This is unacceptable. We can do better. We must do better.

I look forward to following your deliberations over the coming two weeks, and to hearing your proposals and recommendations on how best to move forward in fully achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I wish you all a successful and fruitful session.

Thank you.
