

**Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:
measures taken to implement the Declaration**

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Remarks

Excellencies,

Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Alli p'unlla mashikuna!!! [Quechua],

Buenos días hermanas y hermanos,

Good morning dear sisters and brothers,

I am pleased to be representing UN Women at this opening of the 16th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Madam Chairperson, allow me to congratulate you on your election as the chairperson of the 16th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. It is important that we celebrate the elevation of yet another woman—to be precise, a young female medical doctor to this esteemed position!

I warmly acknowledge and welcome the 12 newly elected and appointed members and look forward to working with you all.

My gratitude also to all the former members, particularly your immediate predecessors, Mr. Alvaro Pop, Ms. Megan Davis and Ms. Dalee Sambo Dorough for their significant contributions to the work of the Forum.

My gratitude also to Chandra Roy-Henriksen, Chief of the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, for her leadership and great work in ensuring that gender equality is center to the indigenous people's agenda.

In its new capacity as the Co-Chair of the Inter Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues and our strong partnership with the Secretariat of the Forum, UN Women welcomes the "Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: measures taken to implement the Declaration" as the special focus on the 16th Session of the Permanent Forum.

The commemoration marks the international community's support to the Declaration as the global blue print and charter of the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples and it is a recognition that from Australia to the Arctic circle, from the Philippines to New Zealand, from Mexico, Peru and throughout Latin America and North America, the diversity of indigenous cultures stand as the great legacy of our humanity.

This is particularly relevant the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and targets are relevant to indigenous peoples and have direct linkages to the human rights commitments in the UN Declaration on the Rights

of Indigenous Peoples or the ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples' rights. Yet I would like to focus my presentation particularly in the relationship between the gender equality compact of the SDGs and the protection and promotion of the human rights of indigenous women and girls and their empowerment.

The unique cultures and traditional knowledge systems of indigenous women as reflected in identity, attachment to ancestral lands, territories, resources, languages, traditional medicine, management of the eco system and agricultural practices are critical for the survival of their entire communities and culture which are also a contribution to the larger economy, society and its sustainable governance for achievement of Agenda 2030. Yet if indigenous women are not empowered the indigenous future is jeopardized and so is the sustainable development project.

We celebrate the indigenous traditions that raise to a sacred level the respect for women's bodily integrity, security and safety; that promote their sexual and reproductive health and rights; and that call for equal access for them to all opportunities, productive resources, and capabilities, their voice, participation and leadership. This must be not only celebrated but also emulated. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that no traditional culture or custom can and should be invoked to justify and perpetuate violation of women's human rights, violence or harmful practices.

Ten years back the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples called for focused attention to the rights and needs of indigenous women and for effective measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions and full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination (cf. articles 21 and 22).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's promises to leave no one behind and reach the furthest first provide additional momentum and impetus for addressing the situation of indigenous women. Yet, the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2015 revealed that indigenous women across the world continue to face disproportionate levels of discrimination, exclusion and violence both as women and as members of indigenous communities.

This discrimination and exclusion is based on factors such ethnic background, geographic location and remoteness, socioeconomic status, their religious beliefs and cultural practices. Removing these structural barriers are fundamental to their realization of SGD-5 - on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls – and all its 9 targets.

Ending Multiple forms of discrimination: Discrimination, exclusion and violence are entrenched by external factors such as discriminatory laws, discriminatory attitudes of service providers, the lack of culturally appropriate services and impunity on the part of law enforcement agencies. (SDG-5.1.) We need to address this through legal reform, policies and special measures across the board within indigenous communities and in the countries of their habitat. Indigenous women and girls need to be aware of their identity /tradition but also their human rights and must claim those rights.

Ending Violence and Harmful practices: The available data suggests that indigenous women and girls tend to experience higher levels of violence compared to their non-indigenous counterparts and they are victims of sexual violence, trafficking and feminicide (SDG-5.2). Effective prevention, protection, prosecution of perpetrators and provision of multi sectoral services are part of comprehensive strategies for the elimination of this scourge. Those related services that are underpinned by intercultural approaches are regarded by indigenous women and girls as being more effective and sustainable in countering and tackling violence.

I cannot emphasize enough that we must show zero tolerance to traditional harmful practices -- including child marriage – which continue to prevent indigenous women from controlling their own fertility, education and decent work trajectory, to participate in decision making and to fully utilize their potential to contribute as equals to the development of the communities and the society (SDG-5.3). A combination of legal, policy and institutional interventions are needed to address impunity for violence against indigenous women and girls.

Economic rights and empowerment. Access, ownership and control over land, natural and productive resources including finance, capacity building and decent jobs is fundamental to economic rights, empowerment and independence of indigenous women. Property rights on their traditional knowledge and natural resources for which free prior and informed consent must be obtained. Measure and efforts must focus on ensuring indigenous women’s full course of education to the highest level – including in STEM and ITC -- lays the foundation for their effective participation in all sectors of economy and society throughout the life cycle. They must be aware and be educated in the matters and disciplines of the transversal world around them so that they navigate through and claim both spaces for their self-realization and empowerment.

Unpaid care and domestic work and link to decent work. Indigenous women are increasingly entering the formal and informal labour market seeking decent work and full and productive employment but are burdened by unpaid care and domestic work and they are heavily represented in low paid, low quality and precarious care and domestic work. Valuing their work overall, reducing, redistributing and (SDG5.4,)

Equal participation and leadership in decision making. Indigenous women are often marginalized from decision-making processes both within and outside their communities. Available data suggests that there are significant disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous women’s access to social services, economic opportunities and political participation (SDG5.5). This must change. The use of temporary special measures are proven to have significant impacts on indigenous women’s standing for, and remaining in, political office and economic empowerment. They should exercise their voice, participation and leadership in both Indigenous forums like parliaments, chiefs council, traditional courts and also in the larger non indigenous legislative, executive and judicial institutions.

Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. While approximately 8 out of 10 countries report a rate of 82 per cent access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services among women generally, the rate falls to 62 per cent among indigenous women and those of other cultural minorities (SDG5.6). This is a major area for redress, action and progress.

Other SDGs and Climate action. Beyond SDG 5 Indigenous women are enablers and beneficiaries of most other SDGs including Poverty Eradication SDG 1, SDG 2 related to agricultural output of indigenous small-scale farmers, and SDG 4 on equal access to education for indigenous children. They are major actors in the environmental dimension of achieving SDGs and on the front lines of Climate Change related action. Recognizing the differential impacts of climate change on indigenous women and support their role and contributions to mitigation and adaptation are crucial when related policies and programmes are being designed, implemented and evaluated.

Indigenous women and girls as agents of change

“Nothing about us, without us”, and “everything about us, with us!” That was the message that we heard from the Indigenous Women in 2013 Lima, ahead of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Women. Despite the challenges that they face, indigenous women are even more determined to live by example, as active agents of change, rather than passive recipients of development. As such, indigenous women have been active in all sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women at which they have imprinted their collective priorities, experiences and lessons for transformative change for present and future generations.

I wish to assure all my indigenous sisters of UN Women’s firm belief in the inclusive agenda that they seek. They are demanding nothing more and nothing less than what the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promises through the principle of leave no one behind and through SDG-5.

Our own programming experiences demonstrate that targeted interventions and programs, significantly increased and dedicated financial investment and other resources for the empowerment of indigenous women can significantly contribute to the achievement of their social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights.

UN Women launched last year its first organizational strategy on visibility and inclusion of indigenous women to ensure that they are not left behind in the design and implementation of our programme priorities and proper funding is assigned covering norms and standard setting and their effective implementation, data and gender statistics and best practices, knowledge revolution, strategic partnerships with, and engendering of indigenous peoples organizations and fostering indigenous women's organizations along with advocacy for movement building. We are also tasked to prepare a Global Study by the UNGA on indigenous Women and we are seeking resources for this undertaken.

The recently concluded CSW-61 considered the issue of empowering indigenous women as a focus area. A lively Interactive Dialogue resulted in a set of policy options for addressing issues affecting indigenous women and girls in areas such as violence, economic empowerment, political voice and climate change.

The CSW61 agreed conclusions emphasizes that measures must be taken “to promote the economic empowerment of indigenous women including by ensuring access to quality and inclusive education and meaningful participation in the economy by addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they face, and promoting their participation in relevant decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas, and respecting and protecting their

traditional and ancestral knowledge, and noting the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for indigenous women and girls". The endorsement of these recommendations could constitute an important contribution to the deliberations of this Forum.

The international community can no longer tolerate the situation where such a precious stakeholder and actor for sustainable development - indigenous women and girls are not only being left behind but are the farthest to reach. The moral and political imperative of the 2030 Agenda's vision of leaving no one behind and reaching the farthest first cannot be met unless we address the daily realities of indigenous women all over the world and empower and hoist them into an indigenous peoples Cosmo universe 50/50 but also an integral part of the Planet 50/50.

UN Women looks forward to continuing its work with partners and other stakeholders, to ensure that its work with and for indigenous women grows in scale and impact in the coming years and make a difference in the realities of indigenous women and girls around the world.

I wish you and all delegates successful deliberations during this 16th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Thank you.