

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**MR. LIU ZHENMIN  
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**

--  
**REMARKS**

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**New York, 9 August 2017**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Deputy Minister of Namibia for Marginalized Communities,  
Distinguished Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,  
Distinguished Chairperson of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of  
Indigenous Peoples,  
Distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples,  
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

I am delighted to welcome you all to this commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Ten years ago, the United Nations General Assembly made history when it adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It was a result of concerted efforts and collaboration between indigenous peoples and Member States that took over 20 years to negotiate.

The adoption of the Declaration marked the beginning of a new partnership between indigenous peoples and Member States. The Declaration is the most comprehensive international legal instrument that sets out the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.

The Declaration marks an important step forward for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. It sets out the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, their rights to lands, territories and resources and to determine their priorities and strategies for development. In this context, the principle of free, prior and informed consent is extremely important. As the Declaration states, Member States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with indigenous peoples before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

Ten years later, I am pleased to say that there has been significant progress in implementing the Declaration - at the international, regional and national levels. Constitutions and laws have been amended in some countries to recognize indigenous peoples, and the diversity of their populations. Regional and national courts have invoked the Declaration to protect indigenous peoples' rights, and national laws and policies are also gradually taking greater account of the distinct identity and rights of indigenous peoples.

At the international level, issues concerning indigenous peoples are firmly on the agenda of the United Nations. We had the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in September 2014, which further institutionalized the principle of partnership and cooperation between Member States and indigenous peoples as a basic pillar of international processes. We have as a result, a System-Wide Action Plan on Indigenous Peoples, that provides the framework for the UN's support, in particular at the country level, where the needs are the most urgent.

We have three indigenous-specific mechanisms – the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – to advise the United Nations on how we can strengthen our work with indigenous peoples.

Yet, we must recognize that despite these achievements and gains, tremendous gaps remain. For example, indigenous peoples face high levels of poverty, poor health and lower education levels. The situation of indigenous women is grave. Virtually all indicators of well-being, where and when available, indicate that indigenous peoples are still often left behind.

Today, as we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we must commit to do more. There is a new paradigm shift with the 2030 Agenda, with its focus on placing people at the centre of sustainable development. Working with indigenous peoples, Member States and other partners, we can make sure that the Sustainable Development Goals are met and that no one is left behind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let's work together to continue to make the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a living document.

Thank you all for your attention.

\*\*\*\*\*