



UNITED NATIONS

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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, 10 August 2020

Excellencies,

Distinguished Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished Elders and representatives of Indigenous Peoples,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we commemorate this important Day, I wish to pay my respects to all Indigenous Peoples around the world. I also acknowledge that in many countries, COVID-19 is posing a particular threat to their health and well-being. It is critical that the global community work to mitigate the pandemic's impact on indigenous peoples.

Excellencies,

Today we celebrate the progress achieved in the 38 years since the inaugural meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Its landmark legacy is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This historic instrument is a framework for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, including in relation to

sustainable development. It establishes the minimum standards for their survival, dignity and well-being.

Yet, indigenous peoples in nearly all countries remain in the most “vulnerable” health category. They have significantly higher rates of diseases than their non-indigenous counterparts, high mortality rates and lower life expectancies. Contributing factors such as poor nutrition, lack of access to sanitation and clean water, and inadequate medical services, contribute to the increased mortality rates from COVID-19.

Despite these immense challenges, indigenous peoples have been using their traditional knowledge and practices to find solutions to the challenges brought by COVID-19.

As they have done for centuries, indigenous peoples continue to adapt to change while maintaining their cultures and traditions. Elders play a key role in transmitting traditional knowledge, culture and practices that can contribute to the well-being and recovery of their communities. We must work with indigenous peoples and their communities to build resilience to the health and socio-economic effects of the pandemic.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The core of the Sustainable Development Goals as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda, is to leave no one behind. Indeed, this is of particular importance for indigenous peoples during this time of the COVID-19 crisis. This requires

information and messaging in indigenous languages, medical supplies and services, emergency sanitation supplies and, where necessary, emergency food and cash aid. COVID-19 responses should be provided with the full agreement and involvement of the indigenous peoples themselves, and in a culturally appropriate manner.

As we work to build back better, let us unite our efforts so that the 2030 Agenda meets the development aspirations of all nations and peoples

We look forward to the continued advice of the three UN mechanisms:

- the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,**
- the Special Rapporteur, and**
- the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – on how to strengthen our work with indigenous peoples.**

I also have the privilege of coordinating the follow-up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, in particular, the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is committed to providing our support to achieve this goal.

Thank you.
