

Informal Interactive Hearing in preparation for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

17-18 June, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Summary report

Context

In its resolution 65/198 of 3 March 2011, the General Assembly agreed to organize a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly, to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, which will be held on 22-23 September 2014.

Resolution 66/296, which established the organizational arrangements of the World Conference, decided that the World Conference should result in a concise, action-oriented outcome document and requested the President of the 68th General Assembly to prepare a draft text on the basis of consultations with Member States and indigenous peoples. The President of the General Assembly has appointed four Advisors (two from Member States; two indigenous people) to assist him in preparing this draft text.

Resolution 66/296 also requested the President of the General Assembly to organize an informal interactive hearing with representatives of indigenous peoples and representatives of entities of the United Nations system, academic institutions, national human rights institutions, parliamentarians, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

The President of the General Assembly convened this hearing on 17 and 18 June in New York at United Nations Headquarters. The primary purpose of the hearing was for participants to provide the President of the General Assembly and his four Advisors with concrete proposals for inclusion in the draft outcome document. Proposals made at the hearing from both Member States and indigenous peoples as well as substantive inputs received via the President of The General Assembly's webpage are summarized below.

Alta Outcome Document

A majority of the interventions made by indigenous peoples' representatives, as well as interventions from some Member States, stressed the unique importance of the Alta Outcome Document, which reflects a consensus agreement among indigenous peoples of the world. They requested that the themes outlined in the Alta Outcome Document form the basis of the World Conference Outcome Document. A number of indigenous speakers also requested that the Alta Outcome Document be included as an Annex to the World Conference Outcome Document.

Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Many speakers emphasized the importance of reaffirming the Declaration. The lack of progress made since the adoption of the Declaration in 2007 was noted, and speakers called for increased efforts to implement its provisions at the national and international levels. Indigenous peoples also called on Member States to establish national and local-level mechanisms that would further the implementation of the Declaration. These bodies would focus on issues such as land and resources rights, the right to self-determination, and identification of lands and territories that have been taken without the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples. Translation of the Declaration into indigenous languages as a means to raise awareness was also mentioned.

Indigenous peoples also called for a voluntary oversight mechanism at the international level to promote adherence to the Declaration, potentially achieved by enhancing the mandate of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Constitutional and legal reforms, as well as implementation of written law and judicial decisions that respect indigenous peoples' rights (especially land rights) were emphasized. Speakers also highlighted the importance of recognizing indigenous peoples' justice systems while also ensuring access to justice and training for judiciaries on integrating customary laws and practices of indigenous peoples.

Violence against indigenous women and girls

Many indigenous peoples and member states highlighted the intolerable levels of violence against indigenous women and girls, calling for urgent action at all levels. Proposals included the following:

- establishment of a Special Rapporteur on violence against indigenous women and girls;
- increased attention to violence against indigenous women and girls by UN treaty bodies including CEDAW, CERD and CRC as well as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; and
- establishment of national level mechanisms, such as ombudsmen, for the protection of indigenous women and girls from violence.

United Nations System

Many indigenous peoples are recognized as distinct governments within their countries. Given that the United Nations only allows their participation as non-governmental organizations, a number of indigenous speakers called for indigenous peoples to be granted permanent observer status.

There were also requests made for the appointment of a high-level United Nations official, such as an Under-Secretary-General for Indigenous Peoples Affairs, who would oversee the implementation of a system-wide action plan that would galvanize implementation of the Declaration.

Post 2015 Development Agenda

Indigenous peoples suffer disproportionately from high levels of poverty, poor access to education, sanitation and healthcare while their livelihoods are threatened by climate change. Although some of the concerns of indigenous peoples have already been included in current versions of proposed goals and targets on sustainable development, speakers referred to the need for additional emphasis of indigenous peoples' concerns, in particular indigenous persons with disabilities.

Lands, territories and natural resources

Indigenous peoples frequently raised their concerns over the activities of transnational corporations, especially those involved in natural resource extraction and the need to regulate their activities. This is an area where indigenous peoples and some Member States share similar interests.

Next steps

A zero draft outcome document is to be shared with Member States and indigenous Peoples shortly. The President of the General Assembly will then convene further consultations in New York at United Nations Headquarters on 16 July and 18 August.