

20 April 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Opening of the Fourteenth Session of the Permanent Forum on  
Indigenous Issues**

**Ambassador Maria Mejia Velez, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council,  
Excellencies,  
Deputy-Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Elders,  
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,  
Distinguished Representatives of Indigenous Peoples,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to address this Fourteenth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and welcome you to the United Nations Headquarters. I know many of you have travelled great distances to participate in this event to address issues that are of critical importance for indigenous peoples around the world.

Eight years ago in this same hall, in September 2007, Member States embraced the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Exactly seven years later, another landmark event took place. In September 2014, the General Assembly held a high-level plenary meeting known as the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples where Member States reaffirmed their commitment to support, respect, promote, advance and in no way diminish the rights of indigenous peoples and to uphold the principles of the Declaration.

The World Conference was a unique event with indigenous peoples participating not only at the event itself, but also in its preparations and consultations on the Outcome Document.

These accomplishments are highly significant as indigenous peoples and Member States worked together in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect. Together, they were able to define specific provisions addressing a number of issues, taking into account the special needs of indigenous women, children, youth, elders and persons with disabilities.

The Outcome Document is visionary with the potential to change the realities of indigenous peoples, including through their participation at the United Nations, which also serves to further strengthen the work of the Organization. Experience has shown that through open engagement and dialogue, Member States and indigenous peoples can find common ground and solutions.

Owing to the unparalleled cooperation that took place, we have an Outcome Document that lays out firm commitments by Member States to take concrete actions on addressing the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I encourage Member States to continue working closely with indigenous peoples in its implementation.

It is significant to note that the Permanent Forum has put emphasis on following up the recommendations in the Outcome Document, including; the post-2015 development agenda and issues affecting youth, including the serious challenges involving self-harm and suicide. A comprehensive engagement with the relevant UN agencies should also result in a strengthened partnership for the full implementation of the Declaration.

This year the international community is working to formulate an ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda. In these efforts we have a unique opportunity to change our world for the better.

Together, we must spare no effort to put in place a framework for development and international cooperation that improves the everyday lives of people worldwide, including indigenous peoples. Indeed, the contributions, knowledge and wisdom of indigenous peoples are of major importance as we seek to address the world's sustainable development challenges.

I wish you a very successful and productive session and thank you for your attention.