

7 March 2016

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
At the Launch Briefing of the General Assembly on the participation  
of the Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Representatives of Indigenous Peoples, Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to you all.

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the courageous Honduran indigenous and environmental rights campaigner, Ms Berta Cáceres, who was murdered just last Friday.

Her death is a reminder to all of us how perilous life can be for indigenous activists and how important it is that we the international community help ensure the respect, promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen, since taking office, I have sought to advance openness, transparency and inclusion in how the UN General Assembly conducts its work.

I am therefore very pleased to see the General Assembly begin a process today on how best to ensure the participation of Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations on matters that affect them.

Their right to participate have been recognized by the 2007 UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

The experience of indigenous peoples' participation to date at the United Nations – through the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples etc – has been a very positive one.

But as the relevant reports from the UN Secretary General on this matter demonstrate, Indigenous Peoples can face obstacles to effective participation. Those reports also include suggestions for the way forward.

Resolution 70/232 of 23 December 2015, therefore, recognizes the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples in the United Nations decision-making processes on matters affecting their rights and provides an important and ambitious mandate in this regard.

That resolution also requests me to conduct consultations on the possible measures to enable the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in the relevant meetings of United Nations bodies affecting them.

Today's briefing is an important step toward the implementation of that mandate.

It will allow both Member States and Indigenous Peoples to embark on a consultative process aimed at improving and strengthening the participation of the indigenous peoples at the United Nations.

I am joined by the four Advisers – two from Member States and two from Indigenous Peoples – that I have appointed to assist me in conducting these consultations in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.

The consultation process should provide concrete guidance on possible procedural and institutional steps and selection criteria to enable meaningful and effective participation by indigenous peoples' representatives at the United Nations.

The task for the current session is to compile the views from Members States, Indigenous Peoples and relevant mechanisms during the consultations.

Those views will form the basis for a draft text to be finalized and adopted by the Assembly during its seventy-first session.

I understand that the Advisers will now present a detailed roadmap on how they intend to conduct the consultation process.

To conclude, I encourage all of you to engage actively in this process and to provide the four Advisers with your fullest support and cooperation throughout.

Thank you.