



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY MEXICO ON OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ON THE OCASSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERT
GROUP MEETING ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

New York, 21 January, 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam President:

I make this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples, composed of Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Spain, and Peru.

The Group of Friends welcomes this important meeting of experts to discuss this fundamental issue for the rights of all indigenous peoples around the world.

Despite increased attention from national governments and the international community, one indigenous language dies approximately every two weeks. As languages become extinct, they take with them customs, knowledge, methods of governance, and diversity that would otherwise enrich countries and their populations.

We believe that the issue of indigenous languages is an issue of rights. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a foundation from which to protect and promote the use and survival of indigenous languages. Article 13 states unequivocally that:

“Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons”.

Furthermore, through the Declaration, States have committed to take effective measures to provide indigenous individuals, particularly children, access to an education in their own culture and in their own language.

The realities of globalization may lead some to question the social utility of public policies that encourage the use of indigenous languages. The Group of Friends is convinced that indigenous cultures as a whole contribute to development, and good governance. Language is a vehicle by which ideas – and many times solutions – are transmitted. In the face of daunting international challenges, the opportunity to communicate with and listen to indigenous peoples and respecting their rights, including to use their own language, should be seen as an asset, not a liability.

The relevance of indigenous languages should never be undermined. Linguistic and cultural diversity are inseparable and mutually reinforcing. The Group of Friends calls on all States to recognize the contribution of indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge on protection of the world's biological diversity, which in turn contributes to addressing the challenges of climate change.

Indigenous languages are not part of a zero-sum equation. When Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit their languages, and when States take effective measures to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal, and administrative proceedings, then laws are translated, and access to public services is provided in indigenous languages. Thus, States increase the well-being, security, and prosperity of their populations. This is a reciprocal engagement, as it brings marginalized communities into the sphere of public life and empowers their participation in political, economic, legal and cultural areas.

Madam President,

The Group of Friends expresses its sincere appreciation to the experts present here today, as well as to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and its Secretariat and reiterates its commitment to work within the United Nations System towards the fulfillment of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you.