

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY  
OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
9 August 2011**

On the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we reaffirm the rights of indigenous peoples and our shared commitment to advance the values of equity, justice and dignity for all.

Indigenous peoples represent remarkable diversity -- 5,000 distinct groups in some 90 countries. They make up more than 5 per cent of the world's population, some 370 million people. Together, they are custodians of a valuable and often fast-disappearing cultural heritage. We see their creativity and innovations in the arts, literature and the sciences. These contributions are highlighted by the theme of this year's observance, "Indigenous designs: celebrating stories and cultures, crafting our own future".

Indigenous peoples face many challenges in maintaining their identity, traditions and customs, and their cultural contributions are at times exploited and commercialized, with little or no recognition. We must work harder to recognize and strengthen their right to control their intellectual property, and help them to protect, develop and be compensated fairly for the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge that is ultimately of benefit to us all.

I encourage all Member States to take concrete steps to address the challenges facing indigenous peoples -- including marginalization, extreme poverty and loss of lands, territories and resources. Countries should also commit to ending the grave human rights abuses that indigenous peoples encounter in many parts of the world.

As we look forward to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014, I urge all Member States to work in full partnership with indigenous people to identify practical ideas and proposals for action at this important gathering.

Together, let us celebrate and recognize the stories, cultures and unique identities of indigenous peoples around the world. At the same time, let us work to strengthen their rights and support their aspirations.