

UNITED NATIONS



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MESSAGE

by

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SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE 2012 UN CONFERENCE

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

AND

COORDINATOR OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE

OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Delivered by

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**To the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples**

New York, 9 August 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished Guests,

Since the first celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, there have been great strides at the United Nations. The UN's commitment to the rights of indigenous peoples is now visible through a variety of initiatives: the establishment of the Permanent Forum, the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the establishment of a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the creation of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These achievements play an important role in shifting the human rights and development discourse towards concrete actions that make a difference in the lives of indigenous peoples.

As Coordinator of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, I am very pleased that the General Assembly decided – by consensus and with a large number of co-sponsors – to hold the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014 (Resolution 65/198). I would like to recognize the Presidency of the General Assembly for being actively engaged in this process from the very start. We look forward to their leadership in defining the modalities and institutional outcomes of the Conference, in full partnership with indigenous peoples, as endorsed during the recent session of the UN Permanent Forum.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, known as Rio+20, will be held in Brazil in June 2012. In my role as Secretary-General, I would like to emphasise that this is a tremendous opportunity for indigenous peoples to share their wisdom with all of us. Indigenous peoples have a unique understanding of Mother Earth as a living entity,

where all beings are interconnected and interdependent. At Rio+20, Member States, the UN system and our partners will be encouraged to renew political commitments and sharpen focus on the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, environmental and above all social. Moving forward in our preparations, let us make special efforts to include the most vulnerable and marginalized of all, indigenous peoples.

On this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we celebrate their cultural diversity, creativity, innovations and resilience in keeping their distinct identity and cultures. And we are also here to recognize significant international achievements on indigenous peoples' issues. But we must not lose sight of the difficulties many indigenous peoples around the world still face: extreme poverty, social exclusion, and often facing threats to their culture or very existence. It is therefore imperative to strengthen our partnerships in order to sustain and revitalize indigenous cultural diversity, and ensure that it is passed on to future generations.

Let me remind us all that it is the obligation of the Member States, the UN family and the international community to stand by the gains achieved by and with indigenous peoples in realizing their aspirations.

As the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, and especially as Coordinator of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, I remain fully committed to this cause. I look forward to working closely with all of you to make the UN Declaration a reality.

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