

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**Remarks by  
MR. WU HONGBO  
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
AND COORDINATOR OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE  
OF THE WORLD'S INDIGNEOUS PEOPLE**

**ON THE  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**Delivered by ASG Shamshad Akhtar**

**New York, 9 August 2013**

Secretary General,  
Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,  
Distinguished Elders,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished guests,

Let me begin by recognizing the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign organizers, from the Onondaga Nation and Neighbours of the Onondaga Nation for being here today. Welcome to this special celebration!

This year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is dedicated to the theme "Indigenous peoples building alliances: Honouring treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements".

Indigenous peoples have contributed greatly to their countries. Historical treaties, agreements and constructive arrangements between indigenous peoples and States were often signed in good faith to ensure mutual respect and harmony within the same lands and territories.

The broad scope of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements is reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This UN Declaration is a tool that can be used to facilitate good indigenous-State relations. Good relations mean upholding treaty obligations, fulfilling promises, and creating new legal agreements.

Treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements constitute a means for the promotion of harmonious, just and positive relations between States and indigenous peoples. These consensual arrangements provide mutual benefit to both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

Unfortunately, in many instances these arrangements have not been respected or implemented. This can result in the loss of lands and resources. It can threaten the very survival of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples continue to face significant challenges related to widespread historical wrongs, including broken treaties and acts of oppression. Indeed there are many challenges to overcome.

Indigenous peoples have survived as peoples with their distinct identities intact. They pass on their knowledge and culture to the future generations. Indigenous peoples add a cultural depth and grounding that is often underappreciated. The knowledge they retain about the country's landscapes and the natural resources, along with their stewardship of the land, are invaluable assets to the country. We must recognize the full contribution of indigenous peoples to their communities and to the rest of society.

As the Coordinator of the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous People, I will help to ensure that the ongoing work within the UN system on mainstreaming and integrating indigenous peoples' issues at both the country and international levels continues. Further, I would like to see a stronger level of commitment towards implementing the United Nations Decade's Programme of Action and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Preparations for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014 are underway. The ongoing work of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples Issues will no doubt contribute enormously to a successful Conference and International Decade.

In closing, I call upon all of you to reflect on the original spirit and intent of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements. How can we help to ensure they are honoured, respected and implemented? Finally, I urge States and the United Nations system to support and strengthen their alliances with indigenous peoples throughout the world.

Thank you.