

United Nations



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**MESSAGE TO THE SECOND SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM
ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**Delivered by Ms. Angela King, Assistant Secretary-General,
Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women**

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Since the first session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues last year, important progress has been made in building a home for indigenous peoples at the United Nations. The Secretariat for the Permanent Forum was launched in January, with funding secured from the contingency fund and Networks of Member States, UN agencies and indigenous peoples' organizations, have begun sharing and collecting information, laying the foundation of an infrastructure capable of responding to the challenges presented by the Forum's broad mandate. These steps build in the UN's long history of attention to the rights of indigenous peoples.

There is not time to lose in this effort. Indigenous peoples continue to be subjected to systemic discrimination and exclusion from economic and political power. They are denied their cultural identities, and displaced from their traditional lands. They are more likely than others to suffer extreme poverty, and all too often experience the human misery caused by conflict.

That makes it all the more urgent to firmly establish indigenous issues as part of the UN system's daily work, and ensure that efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals reach and fully include indigenous people. We must acknowledge the contributions of indigenous peoples not only in areas such as environmental protection, where those contributions are well established and

widely known, but also in other vital areas on the international agenda. Legal standards are essential, including through progress on the draft declaration in indigenous rights, which could in turn, stimulate advances in national laws. Information also plays a key role, so that we have a clear picture of the situation of indigenous peoples; I fully support efforts to build up capacity in this area.

I am also gratified to see the emphasis placed by the Permanent Forum on indigenous children and youth. As an old Maori proverb says, "It is a new day tomorrow and we must prepare for the many indigenous children and grandchildren who will come to take their rightful place in their world as indigenous peoples of the globe. This will enrich and inspire all peoples." In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful session.