

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) 2017 Session
Agenda Item 11: "Follow-Up to the Outcome Document of the World
Conference on Indigenous Peoples"
U.S. Statement, delivered by Linda Lum,
U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs
Friday, April 28, 2017; 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Thank you. The topic of enhancing the participation of indigenous representative institutions at the UN has been on stakeholders' minds for decades. Indigenous representative institutions should not, as current procedures dictate, be required to obtain ECOSOC nongovernmental organization status to take part in UN meetings. The fact that disagreement remains on how to correct this demonstrates that the issue raises extremely complex legal and policy considerations. The December 2015 General Assembly resolution laying out a timetable for action, with the goal of adopting a consensus resolution by the end of the current UNGA session, encourages us to redouble our efforts.

It would benefit us all to find appropriate ways to enhance the participation of indigenous representative institutions. We have seen instances when a broader range of views have informed UN debates. Examples of this are when older persons and persons with disabilities have actively participated in UN fora impacting them. In a similar manner, elected or traditional tribal leaders can enrich the debate with their unique perspectives. During the consultation process with the four advisers, it was reiterated that the UN must remain an organization that is intergovernmental in nature; that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states must be respected; and that the current process focused on indigenous representative institutions must not serve as a precedent for affecting or expanding the participatory rights of any other group. No one has challenged these principles.

While disagreements remain on certain proposals put forward for enhanced participation, there are some areas that have attracted broad agreement. This gives us hope that there will be significant progress on enhancing the participation of indigenous representative institutions as appropriate when the exercise concludes. The United States is committed to working toward this goal.

Turning to the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Indigenous Peoples, the Plan enables the specialized agencies, funds, and programs to better coordinate with member states and indigenous stakeholders on issues of concern to indigenous peoples. This will lead to improved accomplishments on behalf of indigenous peoples.

Thank you for your attention.