

DRAFT STATEMENT UNFPA

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Seventeenth session

New York, 2018

Agenda item 4 – Implementation of six mandated areas

Madame Chair,
Distinguished Members of the Forum,
Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Indigenous friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of United Nations Population Fund, I would like to thank the Distinguished Members of the Forum for this opportunity to address the Forum.

UNFPA, is proud to have launched on Tuesday, in collaboration with UNICEF and UN-Women, the **Fact Sheet on Indigenous Women's Maternal Health and Maternal Mortality**.

We know that across the globe, when it comes to maternal health and maternal mortality, indigenous women and adolescents face persistent inequalities and stigma. Yet the lack of data in this area renders them invisible and presents a major barrier to efforts to address the issue.

The Fact Sheet, for the first time brings together in one place the available data we have on the maternal health status of indigenous women and adolescent girls. It analyses the barriers behind these disparities, and aims to generate actions to address them. Unless we act the SDGs will remain unattainable.

According to the three different types of maternal health indicators we analysed, indigenous women are overwhelmingly less likely to have received health care services and have higher adolescent birth rates.

In Guyana, for example, the birth rate for Amerindian adolescent girls is twice that of the general population; Maasai women in Kenya are twice as likely to have had no antenatal care; and San women in Namibia are ten times more likely to give birth without a skilled birth attendant.

The Fact outlines the various political, economic, social and geographical factors that lie behind these inequalities. And it identifies practical steps at the level of data and positive action that States, international organizations and NGOs need to take to ensure indigenous women and adolescent girls are able to enjoy equal maternal health outcomes.

I would also like to take the opportunity to share the Study that UNFPA, in collaboration with, Chirapaq, has just completed on “**Progress and Challenges with the Recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights & Gender Based Violence**”, and which we will be sharing at a side event today right after this session.

The Study aims to better understand the achievements, limits, barriers and scope of the recommendations of the Permanent Forum with the overall objective of generating actions to achieve progress in the exercise of indigenous women’s rights – with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence.

Some of the findings from the Study were that:

1. In its 16 sessions, the Permanent Forum has raised more than 1,260 recommendations on different areas to guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples. However, Only **16 per cent** of the recommendations explicitly focus on the situation of indigenous women, girls and gender equality. Only 3 per cent relate to sexual and reproductive health and 6 per cent to gender based violence.
2. The Forum has issued 170 recommendations specifically aimed at improving the situation of indigenous women; however, only 10 have been reported as “completed”
3. One of the main challenges the Forum faces is the low response rate it receives from UN Member States. In the 16 years the Forum has been held, only 37 UN Member States have submitted reports for the annual Sessions. Of them, only one country (Mexico) has sent more than 10 reports, while most have sent one or two reports in total. In addition, these reports often focus on process and activities but not results.
4. The Study identifies the key inhibiting and enabling factors for the Permanent Forum to take action. These include such issues as the limited budget and low priority given to indigenous issues in the country; lack of disaggregated information; and lack of mechanisms and processes in the country responsible for follow up to the recommendations.

5. Those factors that facilitate the implementation of the recommendations, include the presence of United Nations Special Rapporteurs; the action of indigenous women's organizations, including in disseminating and enforcing the international commitments assumed by the Government; and the presence and action of United Nations agencies in countries;

In conclusion, the Study recommends a number of steps that could be taken to maximise the full potential of the Forum, which we will share later today.

These two initiatives: The Fact Sheet and the Study of the Forum's recommendations on SRHR and GBV, highlight UNFPA's commitment to supporting indigenous women's rights. We realise that they are just the start of a conversation and look forward to working with you to put into action the recommendations we propose for improving the lives of indigenous women and girls.

