

11/20/16

Myanmar

PT 16 Legborsi 099a

Fifteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

New York, 9-20 May 2016

**PROVISIONAL AGENDA ITEM 9: COORDINATION AMONG THE THREE UNITED NATIONS MECHANISMS PERTAINING TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
STATEMENT BY MR. LEGBORSI SARO PYAGBARA**

On Behalf of The

Board of Trustees of the

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples

Thank you Mister Chair for giving me the opportunity to address the fifteenth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples (UNVFIP). First, let me congratulate you for your appointment as Chairperson of this session. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the twenty-two beneficiaries of the Fund and encourage them to actively engage in this fruitful session.

Last year, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Fund, shedding light over many successful stories showing how instrumental the Fund has been over the years to strengthening the participation of indigenous peoples in deliberations and decision-making processes at the UN level, thus contributing to significant achievements such as the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the more recent Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and also at the national and local communities. Since its creation, the Fund had supported the participation of around 2,000 indigenous women, men, youth, elders and indigenous persons with disabilities from all regions of the world, who had been historically excluded from decision making processes. Several activities took place throughout 2015 around the 30th anniversary of the Fund, in particular the release of a video celebrating the impact of the Fund and an exhibition that took place during the 30th session of the Human Rights Council.

As you well know, when it was established in 1985, the mandate of the Fund was limited to supporting participation in the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Since then, the mandate and scope of the Fund has significantly broadened: not only does the Fund cover participation of indigenous peoples in mechanisms of specific interest to them, in particular the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but it now gives the opportunity for indigenous communities and organizations to engage in deliberations of international human rights mechanisms of a broader scope, including the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review, and Treaty Bodies. By participating in these deliberations, the beneficiaries of the Fund are playing a crucial role in contributing to the development of an international jurisprudence on the human rights of indigenous peoples, jurisprudence that can be referred to in efforts undertaken to advance the rights of indigenous peoples at the domestic level. Enabling the participation of indigenous peoples in meetings that directly affect their lives is essential in ensuring that decisions made carry legitimacy but also yield positive and effective results.

Because the Fund gives indigenous peoples a voice at the UN, the Board of Trustees felt it had a broader role to play than merely providing a financial assistance. With a view to building the capacity and ensuring a more effective participation in UN processes, the Board members of the Fund have been looking for creative ways, with little or no financial implications, to offer human rights training to the beneficiaries of the Fund. These training sessions take place in New York and Geneva during the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and are jointly organized and implemented with DoCip. Furthermore, in partnership with the University of Arizona, a practical guide on how to engage effectively in UN processes and with human rights mechanisms is in the making to support indigenous peoples in their advocacy efforts.

Chair, Excellency (ies), Ladies and Gentlemen, let me now give you a more detailed update on the activities of the Board in 2015-2016.

Last year, a total of ninety eight (98) indigenous peoples' representatives were able to participate in the 14th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the 8th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as sessions of the Human Rights Council, the UPR Working Group, the Human Rights Committee, the

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee Against Torture, as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

This year, so far fifty six (56) indigenous representatives have been selected to attend the 15th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the 9th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as sessions of the Human Rights Council, the UPR Working Group, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child taking place from January to June 2016.

In view of the ever growing demand for participation in meetings of human rights mechanisms and considering the positive impact it has on international jurisprudence, the Board recommended that a budget be set aside to support the participation of additional thirty eight (38) representatives of indigenous communities and organizations in sessions of the Human Rights Council, the UPR Working Group, as well as Treaty bodies that will take place from July 2016 to March 2017.

In 2016, the Fund has also supported two extra-ordinary meetings that related to the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, namely the Workshop on the review of the mandate of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the General Assembly Consultation process aiming to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives in UN meetings affecting them. In order to support robust participation in these two strategic meetings, the members of the Board recommended that an important part of its budget - usually allocated to support participation in the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - be used to facilitate attendance of twenty eight (28) representatives of indigenous peoples in the said consultations.

While the Board members recognize the absolute necessity to support participation of representatives of indigenous peoples in this type of meetings, we are concerned that without predictable, sustainable and adequate funding, the Board will face major difficulties

to carry out an ever expandable mandate. The Fund is increasingly becoming “popular” as it is viewed by member States as the best channel to support the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples in international meetings and the number of applications for funding has substantially grown over the years.

As you know, the work of the Fund is supported by means of voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities. In this regard and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the governments of Argentina, Australia, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Holy See, Mexico, Norway and Spain for their generous contributions to the Voluntary Fund in 2015-2016. However, while acknowledging these contributions and hoping for continuity in the coming years, the Board members also see the necessity to have broader and diversified sources of funding. After assessing the present financial needs of the Fund and in view of the two additional expansions to its mandate, the Board of Trustees recommends a target of \$ 780,000 for the biennium 2016-2017.

Over the years, we have seen how crucial the participation of indigenous peoples in UN deliberations has been to ensure constructive dialogue with Governments and UN agencies and advance the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples internationally and nationally. The Voluntary Fund has played a major role in that context and without appropriate funding, there is a risk that inclusive and representative participation of indigenous peoples in major up-coming processes of great interest to them might be affected.

I would like to conclude by referring to article 38 of the Outcome Document of the World Conference, which invites “member States and actively encourage the private sector, and other institutions to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples (...) as a means of respecting and promoting the rights of indigenous peoples worldwide”.

I thank you.