

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) 2016 Session

Agenda Item 3(d): Follow-Up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

U.S. Statement, delivered by Linda Lum

Friday, May 10, 2016

Thank you. The World Conference outcome document mentions the four main priorities on indigenous peoples shared by the U.S. government and U.S. tribal leaders: enhancing indigenous peoples' participation at the UN; revising EMRIP's mandate so that it can help member states achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; preventing and eliminating violence against indigenous women and girls; and facilitating international repatriation of sacred and culturally significant objects. Permanent Forum segments this afternoon and next Monday will allow for in-depth consideration of repatriation and EMRIP reform, and the United States will take part in those discussions.

This morning let me focus on a topic which is key to having indigenous peoples' concerns heard internationally: **enhancing indigenous peoples' participation at the UN**. Indigenous peoples are distinct from non-governmental organizations and should not have to participate in the UN system as NGOs, because many tribal communities self-govern and their leaders are accountable to those who elected or appointed them. Hearing from tribal representatives would inform the debate by injecting a wider range of views. There is widespread support for enabling indigenous peoples' participation. What remains is for member states to reach consensus on what specific measures to take. Although this task is challenging because the various proposals have raised complex policy and legal considerations, we must make the effort.

The United States submitted written input on the topic, most recently in response to the online consultation facilitated by the four advisers, and in April 2015 in answering a UN questionnaire connected with the Secretary-General's World Conference follow-up report. We outlined which UN bodies would be good

candidates for the new participation procedures; criteria for determining how particular indigenous peoples could qualify for participation under the new procedures; and details about the application, evaluation, and selection processes modelled on those currently used to determine participation in the Permanent Forum. We look forward to further dialogue at the May 18 consultation and beyond.

We would like to call attention to an existing mechanism which may help to strengthen indigenous peoples' participation. Indigenous peoples were one of the nine UN Major Groups that helped develop the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The Major Groups represent segments of society going beyond non-governmental organizations. The other eight groups are business and industry, children and youth, farmers, local authorities, NGOs, the scientific and technical community, women, and workers and trade unions. Other stakeholders – including local communities, volunteer organizations, migrants, older persons, and persons with disabilities – also contributed to crafting the Sustainable Development Goals.

When the 17 SDGs were negotiated, the Major Groups were invited to make recommendations to the co-facilitators. Electronic participation and web-based information was available and thereby increased access to the SDG process. Although the SDGs have been finalized, the Major Groups will continue to function. They will remain involved through the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the UN's central platform for following up on the SDGs in the UN General Assembly and ECOSOC.

While member states, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders continue to develop and consider new proposals on enhancing indigenous peoples' participation under the process chaired by the four advisers, we encourage indigenous peoples to contribute to UN discussions through the Major Groups mechanism. Here we have a mechanism which is already in place and which welcomes indigenous peoples' input on a wide range of development issues.

Let me close by mentioning two other important topics that require follow-up. The United States supports continued efforts on violence against indigenous women.

The topic will be a focus area of the March 2017 Commission on the Status of Women session. It will also be the subject of a June 2016 Human Rights Council resolution. We also emphasize the importance of continued cooperation among member states, indigenous peoples, UN bodies, and other stakeholders to address international repatriation of sacred indigenous objects.

Thank you for your attention.

Thx, LL.