



**SOUTH AFRICAN PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND  
OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

**9<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLES**

**UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**14 JULY 2016**

**PALAIS DES NATIONS**

*Check against delivery*

Mr Chairperson,

South Africa fully supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its objectives, which is in line with the provisions of the South African Constitution.

The South African Constitution is entirely predicated on the fundamental notion of non-discrimination and forms the basis for restoration of the dignity, integrity and the self-worth of our people, including Indigenous Peoples as well as uniting our diverse cultural communities to be able to realize the ideal of “unity in diversity”.

In implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, South Africa is informed by the imperative need to implement policies and legislation aimed at progressively addressing the inequalities created by the past colonial and apartheid eras, to ensure a better life for all South Africans. At the national level, strides have been made, among others, in the areas of (a) the resuscitation and revitalisation of languages of communities in South Africa almost completely decimated by the Colonial and Apartheid regimes through their assimilation policies as well as the preservation of traditional knowledge and the revision of the South African patent laws; (b) land restitution and land claims; (c) acknowledgment of the importance of free, prior and informed consent; and (d) the promulgation of progressive legislation empowering the communities and recognizing their traditional leadership structures.

Mr Chairperson,

The three United Nations bodies have different roles and complement each other to ensure improved recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The golden thread that runs through these different mandates is the Declaration that inspires Indigenous Peoples throughout the world.

We believe the following practical thrusts are important in the discourse on the implementation of the Declaration:

- (a) Strengthening governance of indigenous institutions and peoples;
- (b) Promotion and protection of the cultures and heritages of Indigenous Peoples;
- (c) Improving the capacity and capability of the leadership of Indigenous Peoples;
- (d) A Right to Development based approach and people centred development and in this regard South Africa would full support studies by the EMRIP in this area
- (e) The activities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights which has been a recurring theme throughout our discussions

Finally Chairperson,

In responding to the clarion call of Indigenous Peoples, my Government is of the view that serious thought be given to the elaboration of a Convention with legally binding norms and standards for the maximum promotion, protection and fulfillment of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I thank you.