

**Item 3 and 5: U.S. Country Response to the Report of
the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples**

Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America

**Human Rights Council 21st Session
Geneva
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Thank you. The United States was pleased to welcome Special Rapporteur Anaya for an April-May 2012 visit, during which he consulted many key Administration and indigenous representatives. We appreciate that the report outlining the findings of his visit contains positive assessments of the U.S. programs, policies, and legislation devoted to improving the lives of indigenous peoples. We would like to comment today on the challenges facing indigenous communities that the report highlights.

Native Americans in the United States experience high rates of poverty, illness, substance abuse, suicide, and incarceration, as well as relatively low levels of education. The United States is taking steps to alleviate these problems. President Obama's proposed fiscal year 2013 budget allocates \$19.4 billion for programs benefitting indigenous communities

in education, transportation, and access to justice. The request represents a three percent increase from the amount requested for fiscal year 2012.

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided over \$3 billion to help tribal communities renovate schools on reservations; encourage job creation; improve housing and energy efficiency; and support health facilities and policing services. This appropriation included \$510 million allocated to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Native American Housing Block Grant program.

Next, the Affordable Care Act includes permanent authorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which is the cornerstone legal authority for the provision of health care to American Indians and Native Americans. The Affordable Care Act also enhances the quality of health care and makes it more affordable for all Americans, including American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Act permanently authorizes new and expanded programs and services available to those who rely upon the Indian Health Service (IHS). If funded, that would

amount to a nearly 29 percent increase to IHS budgets since 2009.

Another important action was the passage in June 2010 of the Tribal Law and Order Act. This Act gives tribes greater sentencing authority in criminal trials; strengthens criminal defendants' rights; establishes new guidelines and training for officers handling domestic violence and sex crimes; improves services to victims; helps combat alcohol and drug abuse; and helps at-risk youth. It also expands recruitment and retention of Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal officers and gives them better access to criminal databases.

Indigenous women suffer disproportionate rates of violence, and the U.S. government is working with tribes to address this. The Department of Justice has streamlined the process for tribes to apply for grants for public safety, awarding nearly \$120 million to tribes over the past two years. It has set up a national clearinghouse for training and technical assistance concerning sexual assault of Native American women. And it is funding a project to collect and preserve sexual assault evidence in geographically isolated tribal communities. The Indian

