



Statement by

**H.E. Mr. Ioannis Vrailas
Deputy Head of Delegation
Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

**Economic and Social Council
Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues
Item 3:
Open dialogue (Governments, indigenous peoples' organizations,
United Nations agencies)**

**United Nations
New York
8 May 2012**

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland† and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, align themselves with this declaration.

We take the opportunity to express our support to the Forum as an important venue for the promotion of dialogue between Governments, the United Nations and indigenous peoples, and look forward to following the continued discussions at its 11th session.

We reaffirm our support to the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is an important milestone for indigenous peoples. At this session of the Forum we will celebrate its Fifth Anniversary, along with ever-increasing commitment from Governments to promote its implementation. We welcome the establishment of the UN Indigenous Peoples' Partnership last year. We consider this first global inter-agency initiative to be an important actor in the advancement of indigenous peoples' rights by mainstreaming the issue in the UN system as called for in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and by providing space for dialogue and common understanding between Governments, indigenous peoples, civil society and the private sector through effective and sustainable partnerships. We encourage all States and other stakeholders to support this important initiative.

Mr. Chair,

We encourage all States to increase their efforts to ensure the full respect of the rights of indigenous peoples. On this occasion I would like to express the support of the EU for the core UN mechanisms addressing indigenous issues: the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. We would also like to commend the proven ability of these mechanisms to cooperate effectively with each other by carrying out their respective mandates in a complementary manner. We highly appreciate the work and added value of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to this synergy of UN mechanisms. This year we particularly welcome the emphasis on violence against indigenous women and girls. The focus is particularly timely given that violence against women is going to be the main theme of next year's Commission on the Status of Women. It is important to recognize that poverty and discrimination increase the risk of violence against women. There is a critical need to take action at both national, local and community levels to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against indigenous women.

In the past session of the CSW, the role of indigenous women as key actors in poverty and hunger eradication was addressed in a new resolution consensus at the Commission on the Status of Women in March. We would like to reiterate our appreciation of this initiative, including its focus on participation and empowerment, as well as its recognition of the importance of a rights-based approach in this context.

*Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

†Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

In line with the EU support to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, indigenous peoples' rights continue to be mainstreamed in EU development cooperation. We take a rights based approach to the practical and financial support to indigenous peoples around the world. The key principle for safeguarding indigenous peoples rights in development cooperation is to ensure their full participation and the free and prior informed consent of the communities concerned. The EU provides direct support to civil society organisations working on indigenous issues, in particular through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights under which there is wide scope for specific actions to be implemented at the country, transnational or regional levels regarding empowerment, capacity-building and anti-discrimination.

Mr. Chair,

Issues affecting indigenous peoples often cross state boundaries. In such cases, international cooperation has a major role to play in advancing the situations and rights of indigenous peoples.

The EU provides financial support to the development of the economic, social and environmental potential of the Arctic regions of the EU and neighbouring areas through a regional approach, including cross-border and transnational collaboration in the fields of accessibility, education, research, innovation, business competitiveness, natural resources and cultural heritage. A good example is the programme 'Kolarctic', which brings together Arctic indigenous peoples from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

Many indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by biodiversity loss and climate change, as many communities depend on some of the most fragile and vulnerable ecosystems. We would like to express our deep concern regarding the threats of climate change to the very survival of many indigenous peoples and its negative impacts on traditional lifestyles and cultures.

It is hence on the agenda of the EU to cooperate with and support the establishment of partnerships with indigenous peoples in order to contribute, not only to the protection and promotion of their rights, including human rights, but also to sustainable development. We continue to participate actively in the initiatives in the framework of the Convention of Biological Diversity by supporting indigenous peoples in their contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, including through the preservation and maintenance of knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

Next month more than 50.000 people will gather in Rio de Janeiro at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development. Rio+20 is a unique opportunity to secure renewed political commitment in order to advance the sustainable development agenda in a comprehensive way. We would like to stress the important role indigenous peoples have in implementation of sustainable development, and the importance, therefore, of the participation of indigenous peoples in the promotion of sustainable development in practice. We should also not forget, that quality of life of indigenous peoples strongly depends on use of natural resources and consequently on sustainability of human actions, including development. In this regard we must recognize the role of indigenous peoples and their rights and the importance of the UN

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the global, regional and national implementation of sustainable development strategies.

Mr. Chair,

The EU looks forward to the debate during this session of the Forum.

I thank you.