

New York, 25 April, 2017

EU STATEMENT

**HIGH LEVEL EVENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
TO MARK THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF
THE UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Today we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The EU supported the adoption of the Declaration nearly 10 years ago on 13 September in 2007. After more than 20 years of negotiations, its adoption was a significant milestone for all of us – UN Member states and indigenous peoples – recalling the importance of respect of human rights of all and recognising the specific difficulties faced.

The adoption of the Declaration was also important in promoting enhanced dialogue and consultation with indigenous peoples, based on the respect for cultural diversity and the inherent dignity of every human being. It was also this cooperative approach that ensured the successful Outcome of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014.

The EU's support to UNDRIP is based on the EU's core principles of respect for human rights and equality and zero tolerance of discrimination on any grounds. The EU values the Declaration as a key instrument for indigenous peoples and for promoting human rights. And it is from this view point that the EU has contributed to the international advancement and recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples as set out in the UNDRIP.

Since 2007, thanks to these developments at the United Nations, indigenous issues have been better taken into account both at the national and international level. The EU also recognises that indigenous peoples' own contribution has been essential in this regard.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that difficulties remain and that global challenges such as those related to the global economic crisis, migration, terrorism, poverty and rising inequalities can also affect disproportionately indigenous peoples and local communities.

The EU contributes to addressing these challenges through its policy tools and cooperation programmes. One of the EU's most important human rights policy tools is our Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy from 2012 and its renewed Action Plan from

2015. In this Action Plan, the EU made an overall commitment to further develop EU policy in line with UNDRIP and the Outcome Document of the World Conference.

I would like to refer to the emphasis put in the Action Plan on supporting human rights defenders, including indigenous human rights defenders. Activities related to social, economic and cultural rights, as well as human rights issues related to land and natural resources, biodiversity and climate change are included as important priority areas in this Action Plan.

We also emphasise the role of National Human Rights Institutions, especially those in compliance with the Paris Principles. The EU believes that well-functioning National Human Rights Institutions are vital, in any country, for the protection and promotion of human rights, including the elimination of discrimination on any grounds. We would like to specifically commend the increasing number of National Human Rights Institutions that take upon them to work on indigenous issues in genuine dialogue with indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions.

With regard to our cooperation programmes, we are currently updating the EU's development cooperation policies so that they are aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Once adopted these new cooperation policies will apply a strengthened rights based approach to development encompassing all human rights. This will ensure adequate attention for indigenous issues in line with the EU's commitments stemming from UNDRIP and the Outcome of the World Conference. In the context of the SDGs, we would like to specifically mention the EU's support to the collaborative partnership of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), the Forest-Peoples Programme (FPP), the International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and the Tebtebba Foundation on the development of the "Indigenous Navigator" Project. The "Indigenous Navigator" is an enabling open source tool that can be used by indigenous peoples world-wide to gather data on human rights and development for relevant SDGs.

Such support underlines the importance that the EU attaches to the dialogue with indigenous peoples. Many of the achievements we are able to celebrate today could not have happened without this dialogue, and we must continue in the same collaborative spirit to rise to the challenges that we all, as an international community, face.

Thanks to UNDRIP we have seen progress in many places and increased resilience in the face of setbacks and challenges. The EU will continue to do its share in promoting the values and principles of this important Declaration. As part of our activities to celebrate its tenth anniversary, the EU will support a workshop on making the SDGs work for indigenous peoples in conjunction with the EU Development Days in June in Brussels.

The EU will also continue to engage in the currently ongoing consultations - led by the President of the General Assembly and his advisors - on possible measures to enable the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant UN bodies on issues affecting them.

I thank you very much for your attention.