



## **STATEMENT AT THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING COMMEMORATING OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

New York, 25 April, 2017  
*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

### **Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished guests:**

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples, composed of Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Spain, Paraguay, Peru, and my own country, Mexico.

It would seem that as we commemorate the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we celebrate ten years of engagement. However, we must not forget that the Declaration was agreed only after almost 25 years of deliberation by Member States and indigenous peoples. Today, the document is understood by many to constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world.

For the members of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples, indigenous issues are issues of human rights, participation, sustainable development, gender equality and empowerment for social inclusion.

The Declaration is the most comprehensive agreement that recognizes the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples. Today and every day should serve as an opportunity to highlight the contributions of indigenous peoples that continue to enrich our societies through their cultures, expressions, knowledge, traditions, languages, histories and aspirations.

Mr. President,

We should also recall that indigenous peoples around the world continue to face specific vulnerabilities and marginalization. Having faced historical and continued colonization, racism, and other forms of discrimination, many peoples are vulnerable as development processes in developed and developing countries leave them behind. They are often among the most disadvantaged compared to the rest of populations in all countries where they live, and often over-represented among the poor, the illiterate and the unemployed.

When we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we committed to leave no one behind. This Agenda is of vital importance to the 370 million indigenous peoples around the world and we must promote their rights with respect to their own contributions to sustainable development. We are convinced that the incorporation of indigenous peoples in all aspects of development assist in the implementation of the SDGs. Member States, would be well served to share in the profound knowledge of nature and sustainability held by indigenous peoples. We also encourage Member States to establish functional mechanisms of full participation of indigenous communities on issues that may affect them.

Meanwhile, the United Nations must also play a central role. We call for a renewal of the commitment of the United Nations System and its Member States to remedy historic injustices resulting from racism, discrimination, and inequalities long suffered by indigenous peoples, in particular women and girls. We will work to ensure they are front and center as rights-holders and full participants in societies.

We salute the System Wide Action Plan (SWAP) on indigenous peoples for highlighting the needs and opportunities for indigenous peoples at the UN. Its effective implementation should strengthen national capacities to fully implement the Declaration.

**Mr. President,**

Indigenous peoples have their own perspectives and priorities as peoples, and it is time we listen. Ten years after adoption of the Declaration, we are now engaged in a process that will result in enhanced participation of indigenous peoples in relevant meetings of the United Nations. It is time to make sure that indigenous peoples can have their voices heard in those issues that pertain directly to them at the United Nations

In this sense, we reiterate our countries' support to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and will be guided by its relevant articles, alongside our existing domestic provisions as we promote their participation of indigenous peoples within the United Nations, while fully respecting the UN Charter.

**Mr. President,**

We take this opportunity to recall that we, Member States, are expected to take effective measures, in order to promote, protect and respect the rights of all Indigenous Peoples, particularly the rights of indigenous women and girls as well indigenous persons with disabilities.

We call upon all Member States to work toward the improvement of their economic and social conditions, access to justice, employment, education, housing, sanitation, health and social security, while taking into account the visions and aspirations of indigenous peoples.

We urge Member States to take concrete measures to realize the aspirations contained in the declaration.

George Herbert Mead stated that “society is unity in diversity”. The Member States of the Group of Friends are mosaic of ethnicities, cultures, races and languages. We celebrate our diversity as a source of strength. Let us also celebrate the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a source tenacity in favour of human rights, sustainable development and peace.