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MR. WU HONGBO
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS,
SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT,
AND SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
TO COORDINATE FOLLOW UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES

OPENING SESSION OF THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

New York, 20 April 2015

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,
Honorable Elders,
Distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations,
Distinguished representatives of the UN system, other inter-governmental organizations and of
civil society,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to address the opening of the fourteenth session of the Permanent
Forum on Indigenous Issues.

A very warm welcome to all of you -representatives from Indigenous Peoples, Member
States, UN system partners, and other intergovernmental and Non-governmental Organizations –
who have come together to advance indigenous peoples' rights around the world.

In September 2014, the historic World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held here
at the UN Headquarters in New York. In the action-oriented Outcome Document, States reaffirm
their support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They also committed
to take specific actions at the global, national and local levels to implement these rights through
concrete measures and activities. The outcome document also reiterates the important and
continuing role of the United Nations in promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous
peoples.

I have the privilege of being designated by the Secretary-General as the Senior Official of
the United Nations with the responsibility to follow up on the World Conference on Indigenous
Peoples. I am truly honoured to have been given this responsibility. This responsibility entails,
specifically,

- to develop and to coordinate, a system-wide action plan to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- to raise awareness on the rights of indigenous peoples at the highest possible level;
- and to increase coherence of the activities of the UN system in this regard.

My aspiration and ambition is the full implementation of the outcome document of the World Conference, which provides us with an excellent road map in achieving the ends of the Declaration. Rest assured that I will make every effort to fulfil my responsibilities in a responsive, effective and engaged manner. I look forward to your input and guidance as I proceed with this important task.

Distinguished representatives,

As you know, 2015 is a year for global action. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development will take place in Addis Ababa in July. Then, Member States are expected to adopt the Post-2015 development agenda in September here in New York, and achieve a meaningful, universal agreement on climate change the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December in Paris. These three major milestones will shape international cooperation for years to come. I hope I can count on all of you – Member States, indigenous peoples and UN agencies to make sure indigenous peoples rights and development priorities are firmly on the agenda of these major events, taking the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the basic framework.

Distinguished representatives,

The fourteenth session is the Permanent Forum's review year, and there will be a special emphasis on the implementation of the Permanent Forum's recommendations. There will also be discussions on the follow-up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples; the Post-2015 development agenda; youth, self-harm and suicide with a regional focus on the Pacific.

This session will be an important opportunity for Member States and Indigenous Peoples to continue the established practice of an open and inclusive discussion, under the leadership of the Permanent Forum.

Distinguished delegates,
Distinguished Chairperson and Members of the Forum,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This year we will be celebrating the 70 year anniversary of the United Nations. For indigenous peoples and many other groups that have come to the UN in search of justice, the world today is a very different place than it was 70 years ago. Yet, the destructive legacies of past actions are still with us. Adding to this, we face new challenges. New diseases, growing income disparity, pressures on natural resources, and climate change necessitate responses that the UN could not foresee in its early years.

The United Nations has and continues to serve as a catalyst for incremental steps towards addressing the many problems that the world confronts. The gains made at the international level, such as the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, represent both significant achievements and challenges for the United Nations in the future, challenges to ensure that the rights affirmed, the values recognized, and the tenets we share - are implemented and made a reality.

I would like to thank the Member States who made contributions to the Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues in 2014: Denmark, Estonia, Finland and Christensen Fund from USA. I express my deep appreciation for your contribution. It is through this Trust Fund that we directly support the substantive work of the Forum.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Russian Federation for graciously hosting the intersessional meeting of the Permanent Forum in February this year, and for providing them with the opportunity to gain a better insight to the situation of indigenous peoples in your country.

In closing, allow me to reiterate our commitment to indigenous peoples. I wish you a successful 14th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Thank you.
