

**UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES, 16th SESSION
STATEMENT BY UN ENVIRONMENT**

Agenda Item 4

Jamil Ahmad, Deputy Director, UN Environment New York Office

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Mme. Chair, Excellencies, Indigenous Peoples' Representatives, Delegates and Colleagues,

It is my honour to address this year's Permanent Forum on behalf of UN Environment. I wish to congratulate you, Mme. Chair on your election and wish to assure you of our continued support to the Forum.

Since the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ten years ago, the United Nations and its Funds and Programmes, as well as Member States have made tremendous efforts to protect the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Nonetheless we need, we must, do more. It is with deep concern that we have witnessed the growing numbers of Environmental Human Rights Defenders who lost their lives during the past decade. One such champion among many that fought for the protection of human rights and the environment by putting their life on the line, was Berta Cáceres.

Ms. Cáceres was murdered in March last year. Throughout her life, she fought for indigenous rights, against illegal logging and development projects operating on the lands of the Lenca people without their free, prior and informed consultation and consent. Her murder sparked an international outcry and put a spotlight on the violence and intimidation environmental activists face in many countries.

UN Environment therefore recognized Berta Cáceres posthumously with the United Nations' highest environmental award, the Champions of the Earth, late last year. I allow myself to quote our Executive Director:

"Berta Cáceres refused to let powerful interests trample the rights of the poor and marginalized and destroy the ecosystems on which they depend. Her focus was local, but her cause and her sacrifice resonate globally. She is a great inspiration – and a great loss - to anyone fighting for environmental rights."

UN Environment is committed to continue supporting Environmental Human Rights Defenders and collaborating closely with the Special Rapporteurs and Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights on these cases.

Beyond this, UN Environment is continuously strengthening its engagement with partners, including Indigenous Peoples, to enhance environmental sustainability and to realize the 2030 Agenda, while ensuring that our projects and activities respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and reflect their perspectives and needs.

One such example is the ongoing work on the sixth edition of our flagship assessment: the Global Environment Outlook – in short GEO-6 –to be launched in mid-2019. GEO-6 will build on regional assessment processes and create a comprehensive picture of the state of the environment and how environmental factors contribute to human well-being. GEO-6 is based on a consultative and participatory process that will provide the first integrative baseline in light of global megatrends. It is supported by open access to data, with due consideration given to gender, indigenous knowledge and cultural dimensions. UN Environment is grateful to Ms. Joji Cariño who will support the High-Level Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Advisory Group which is established to provide guidance to the policy assessment process, leadership on the summary for policy makers, as well as provide substantive support to relevant outreach activities.

The UN Environment Assembly is the ministerial level governing body on the environment, and enjoys the universal membership of all 193 UN Member States and the full involvement of major groups and stakeholders. Last May, the UN Environment Assembly adopted resolution 2/5 on “Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The resolution stresses “the importance of respecting, protecting and promoting human rights and gender equity and recognizing the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. Indigenous experts who actively participated in the second UN Environment Assembly also contributed substantially to the preparation of resolution 2/24 on "Combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands". This resolution calls for conducting relevant research, including a gap analysis of existing data and information on rangelands and pastoralism which UN Environment will embark on with its partners.

Indigenous communities are often on the frontlines of environmental pollution. Such pollution issues fundamentally implicate the human rights of those who are most at risk from it and who need to be protected. This year the Third Session of the UN Environment Assembly will take up the theme “Towards a Pollution Free Planet” from 4-6 December 2017. The assembly’s meeting will be preceded by the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum on 2-3 December. We look forward to welcoming you all to Nairobi.

Finally, we look forward to the discussions during this year’s Permanent Forum and wish to thank you. Mme. Chair.