

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) 2017 Session**

**Agenda Item 8: “Tenth Anniversary of the UN Declaration: Measures Taken to Implement the Declaration”**

**U.S. Statement, AS-DELIVERED by Minister-Counselor Stefanie Amadeo**

**Tuesday, April 25, 2017; 3:00 – 6:00 pm**

On the tenth anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the United States joins all stakeholders in highlighting progress toward achieving its goals. The U.S. government maintains a government-to-government relationship with U.S. federally recognized tribes, and honors its trust responsibility to federally recognized tribes. U.S. agencies look to the Declaration as they work to help improve conditions in federally recognized and, as appropriate, other indigenous communities. Moreover, agencies consult regularly with tribes about proposed actions implicating tribal interests. At this time, ten federal agencies collaborate on supporting the Declaration. In a December 2016 interagency training session, participants developed a deepened understanding of the Declaration and identified opportunities for further cooperation.

At the 2016 White House Tribal Nations Conference, Secretaries in the Executive Branch of the U.S. government, other senior U.S. officials, and tribal leaders gathered to have constructive discussions with tribal leaders, including on issues that are prominent within the UN Declaration. The most recent 2016 White House Tribal Nations Conference Progress Report, entitled “A Renewed Era of Federal-Tribal Relations,” is online and describes the many tribal-related policies and programs in place in the United States.

Bearing in mind that international repatriation, environmental protection, and cultural preservation are areas that the Declaration covers, we would like to mention some recent developments.

Led by the Departments of State, Interior, Justice, and Homeland Security, the U.S. government works to strengthen mechanisms for international repatriation. We support Native American tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations in their efforts to repatriate sensitive cultural items, including sacred objects, objects of cultural

patrimony, ancestral remains, and funerary objects. U.S. officials have initiated dialogue with French authorities regarding auction sales held in Paris which are of great concern to Native American tribes. The U.S. government also supports tribal efforts to repatriate ancestral remains and other cultural heritage items held by foreign museums or collectors in several European nations. We appreciate cooperation from other member states on these efforts.

Nine government agencies signed a September 2016 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Regarding Interagency Coordination and Collaboration for the Protection of Tribal Treaty Rights, which commits to protecting tribal treaty rights in agency decision-making processes.

Consistent with its 2013 “Plan to Support the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,” the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s (ACHP) has issued formal guidance for federal agencies on how the Declaration and U.S. historic preservation regulations intersect. The Advisory Council is preparing a report on “The National Historic Preservation Act as a Model for the Protection of Sacred Places in Other Nations,” and plans to complete the report this year.

As a final point, we applaud the adoption of the September 2016 HRC resolution on the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That resolution empowers EMRIP members to call attention to abuses and other areas requiring attention, enabling it to respond more effectively to member states and indigenous peoples’ concerns. Kristen Carpenter, a U.S. expert, will be serving a one-year term on EMRIP.

Thank you for your attention. The United States looks forward to a useful two-week session to advance the well-being of indigenous peoples.