

EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (EMRIP)

12TH SESSION, JULY 15-19 2019

UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA SWITZERLAND

Item 8: Dialogue with the UN SRIPs, Chair of the UNPFII, Board of Trustees of the UNVFIP and members of CEDAW & HRC on the UNDRIP Implementation.

Joint statement of the current & former fellows of the OHCHR Indigenous Fellowship Programme

Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, distinguished experts, Indigenous peoples' representatives, and all my relations – hãfa adai, greetings, and thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of the 35 current **Indigenous Fellows & over 20 former fellows** who are also currently attending this session.

This year, we are celebrating the 22nd anniversary of the programme, giving us the opportunity to look back at what previous Indigenous Fellows have been able to accomplish both at the local, regional and international levels.

Since 1997, the programme has advanced the participation of indigenous peoples and ensuring their access to the UN system, and human rights instruments and mechanisms, including those specifically dealing with indigenous issues. The Programme has provided vital exposure to these mechanisms, for example, in some countries, the first shadow reports to the various Treaty Bodies on indigenous issues resulted from previous Indigenous Fellows, *e.g. CRPD from Mexico, CEDAW from Colombia and CERD from DRC.*

With the key UN Mechanism specific to indigenous peoples, we learned that 5 of our former fellows were recently appointed to serve as members of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2020-2022. In this Session, we are very proud to see Megan Davis in action as a current member of EMRIP and finally, we are equally pleased to know that 2 of our former fellows are currently serving as member of the Board of Trustees of the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples.

Madam Chair, this tells us that the Programme is vastly successful, because Indigenous Fellows have proved to be better equipped to assist their organizations and communities in protecting and promoting their rights.

Chair, now I will update you on the current activities and the future of the program. A total of 35 Indigenous Fellows from 27 countries, of whom 18 women & 17 men. The programme afforded each of us an in-depth and experiential learning on the UN system, mandates, activities, international human rights instruments and mechanisms, including those specifically dealing with indigenous issues, through rigorous and interactive training sessions. The program is currently available in four languages – English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Although the programme has expanded over the years, the amount of time for the training has been significantly shortened, from the initial one year to just one month, and thus the intensity of the training sessions. In the past, Indigenous Fellows also participated in the Permanent Forum in New York and UNESCO in Paris, which were very valuable components of the programme, however these opportunities are no longer included.

In light of this information, we recommend that this Programme should grow along with the mounting interest by indigenous peoples. We recommend to OHCHR the strengthening of the national and regional components of the Programme to better meet the capacity building needs of indigenous peoples and at the same time, ensuring that the content of the programme is closer to the realities of indigenous peoples on the ground. We recommend to the UN system in general, and to the UN Country Teams in particular, to tap former fellows as resource in their work, projects and activities on indigenous issues at the country, regional and international levels and at the same time, consider former fellows as intermediary between the UN and indigenous organizations. We further recommend to OHCHR to ensure and facilitate the meeting of former fellows, in order to take stock and review the progress of the Programme.

Madam Chair, during the course of the Programme, we met with over 60 UN officials and staff from various UN agencies, Independent experts of the Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures, representatives of civil society, indigenous peoples, especially this year's grantees of the Voluntary Fund whom we have been having joint session since this week, about 20 former Indigenous Fellows whom we just had a mixed- gender Football match last night, and government representatives.

With that in mind, we would like to extend our gratitude to all the partners of the Programme, notably the Geneva International Welcome Center (CAGI) for providing us a space we call home while in Geneva for the past 4 weeks, and to the Governments of Guatemala, Mexico, Switzerland, Russia; including the local government of Carouge for their continuous technical, financial and substantive support to the Programme.