

**OPENING SESSION OF THE TWENTY THIRD SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS
ISSUES**

HINDOU OUMAROU IBRAHIM

New York, 15 April 2024

His Excellency DENNIS FRANCIS, President of the 78th session of the General Assembly,

His Excellency DAVID CHOQUEHUANCA, Vice President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia,

Her Excellency PAULA NARVÁEZ, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council,

Her Excellency, SÔNIA GUAJAJARA, Minister of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil,

Mr LI JUNHUA, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs,

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished Elders, Delegates, Indigenous sisters and brothers,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to welcome all of you to the 23rd session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

I wish to start by paying my respects to the original inhabitants of this land, the ONONDAGA Nation and Peoples, in particular to Chief TADODAHO SID HILL.

Thank you for the blessing for the opening and for welcoming our permanent forum on your land.

I would like to express my gratitude to my fellow Members of the Permanent Forum for placing their trust in me to chair this session.

Furthermore, on behalf of the Members and myself, we deeply appreciate the wisdom, dedication, and energy of Mr. DARIO MEJIA MONTALVO, Chairperson of the 21st and 22nd sessions of the Permanent Forum.

He has demonstrated exceptional leadership over the past two consecutive sessions. We have made great progress, and we will continue in the path he forged, may I request a big round of applause to Dario please. Muchas Gracias, dear brother !

Excellences, chers sœurs et frères, chers amis,

Je voudrais avoir une pensée spéciale pour mes parents, pour mes grands-parents, et en particulier pour ma mère et pour mes grands-mères.

Elles m'ont beaucoup appris, comme tous nos parents et grands parents autochtones.

Elles m'ont appris le lien avec notre environnement, et tous ces savoirs traditionnels qu'un jour je passerai à mon tour à mes enfants et aux autres jeunes filles de ma communauté.

Elles m'ont appris aussi que pour protéger nos droits, pour défendre notre identité, notre culture, malgré les discriminations, nous devons prendre les devants.

Nous devons nous battre, chaque jour, chaque minute, chaque seconde. C'est ce que je ferai avec vous tout au long de cette année et je compte sur le soutien précieux des membres et de chacun de vous pour aider le forum de contribuer aux droits et au bien-être des Peuples Autochtones dans le monde.

Excellencies, friends, sisters and brothers,

The special theme of this year's session is *"Enhancing Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: emphasizing the voices of Indigenous youth"*.

Collectively, we must show up for the younger generations. This generation that is the first one to have never known a world without the severe effects of climate change, and that face, everywhere, the mass extinction of biodiversity, whether they are in forest, in the glacial, on the islands or the savannah, in the deserts and mountains, in all our ecosystems.

These youth are living in a world that is more and more violent and are urging us to build peace and reconciliation.

A world where discriminations and inequalities are rising again. Where the members of the United Nation are failing to implement the SDGs. Where human rights and Indigenous Peoples' rights are threatened by States, companies, everywhere. A world where our homes are still under the threat of land grabbing and extraction of the resources that are now considered critical minerals.

We must admit that this world is **scary** for young Indigenous Peoples.

They will be at the heart of our session here in the Permanent Forum, and they will be our **motivation**. This is the way we will honor the memory of our elders.

We are delighted to welcome more than 100 youth delegates for this year's session of the Permanent Forum. As you take up the role as the leaders of tomorrow, we are confident that your advocacy is rooted in a deep respect for our Indigenous Elders and for the knowledge and wisdom that they have transmitted to us all.

Excellencies, distinguished representatives,

Indigenous Peoples have fought tirelessly for decades to achieve recognition on the international stage. We owe it to our predecessors. We pay honor to our ancestors and to thousands of Indigenous activists and leaders who sacrificed their **lives** in defense of our **rights**.

However, Indigenous Peoples' global advocacy is at a critical turning point. We, at the Permanent Forum, continue to sound the alarm on the issue of Indigenous Peoples being conflated with other groups such as "local communities".

Together with the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we call on Member States and UN agencies to refrain from equating Indigenous Peoples with other groups within international processes and mechanisms. This threatens to dilute the distinct collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly the right to exercise our self-determination.

Excellencies, friends, Dear Brothers and Sisters

Next year, we will celebrate, at this forum, the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

A quarter of a century. It will be an important celebration and we can be proud of all that have been done.

Over the last 25 years, we obtain recognition, we lead great battle for our lands, for the recognition of our collective rights, for the respect and the protection of our culture and our knowledge.

But the road to self determination is still long.

Self-determination is a precondition to safeguarding our existence as Indigenous Peoples. And today, more than ever, our existence as Indigenous Peoples is under threat. On a burning planet, our ecosystems could disappear in the next decades. And our culture, our identity, our rights, our lives can burn with it.

In the meantime, self-determination for Indigenous Peoples benefits everyone. As the true guardians of the world's biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples protect our Mother Earth.

Indigenous-led conservation can restore soils, reduce carbon emissions, and ensure sustainable food production.

Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge can also shape solutions for global problems, by demonstrating that Indigenous Peoples are leading by example.

We have proven that our economies are resilient, and produce food and goods in a sustainable and fair dimension. We have proven that our culture encourages cooperation with Mother Earth, rather than destroying ecosystems.

This is the gift Indigenous Peoples are giving to the planet and its inhabitants.

Therefore, enabling Indigenous People's self-determination is not a threat to the States or the United Nations and its member states, but a pathway for all of us to work together.

It is a unique opportunity to bring concrete solution to the crisis we are all facing.

Excellencies, distinguished representatives,

To support Indigenous Peoples to own and manage their lands, territories and resources, and to exercise their right to self-determination is reaching a critical moment. Therefore, access to direct financing for Indigenous Peoples in areas such as environmental management, sustainable economy, and food sovereignty is crucial.

Indigenous Peoples are still largely ignored by international financial institutions, but also by private actors, corporations and local governments.

For Member States, this is a unique opportunity: Indigenous Peoples are the best and fastest allies when it comes to addressing climate and biodiversity challenge. We are the first responders of the climate and environment emergencies.

But like any first responders, we need all the support we can get to put out the fires and crises of our planet. In this sense, direct funding for Indigenous Peoples is essential to accelerate climate and biodiversity action all over the planet. Indigenous Peoples are leading, and can scale up concrete solutions that will help all of humanity to meet the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, and the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

We at the Permanent Forum invite Member States, as well as non-state actors, to scale up long-term direct funding mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples that promote and support Indigenous-led activities for all ecosystems, with their full and effective participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.

This is our common goal: To give indigenous youth a chance to make a difference.

To give them hope instead of fear.

To give them resources that will protect our cultures, enhance our solutions, and help us to help all of humanity and Mother Earth.

Ousseko Miyetti Thank you.