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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement by Counsellor Yao Shaojun at the 14th Session
of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

(April 20, New York)

Madam Chairperson,

China wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this session and welcomes the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues convenes this meeting. Since last October, the United Nations has taken positive steps to implement the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, including appointing USG Wu Hongbo as the UN senior official in charge of indigenous issues and developing a system-wide plan of action. China appreciates these efforts.

Indigenous peoples enjoyed a glorious history and brilliant civilizations. However, as a result of western colonial domination in the past several centuries, indigenous peoples have been deprived of their land; their cultures and languages have been severely affected and their human rights and fundamental freedom trampled upon. In those countries, indigenous communities suffer from discrimination, violence and other unjust treatments even today. China supports the

promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and has actively participated in the UN activities concerning indigenous peoples, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. China would like to make the following observations in this connection.

First, we should seize opportunities to enhance the protection of the rights and interests of indigenous peoples. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. It is also the year when the post-2015 development agenda will come into being. The international community should take this opportunity to pay more attention to indigenous issues and take effective measures in promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Some developed countries should demonstrate political will, earnestly implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, and effectively retribute the historical injustices suffered by indigenous peoples. At present, the report of the Open-Ended Working Group on Sustainable Development has already incorporated elements on indigenous peoples. We hope the international community will continue to integrate elements on indigenous peoples into the post-2015 development agenda.

Secondly, development is the basis for the achievement of the rights of indigenous peoples. Most indigenous communities face the challenges of slow economic and social development and backward public infrastructure. We call upon the countries concerned to effectively improve the conditions of indigenous peoples in education, health, transportation and housing. The UN system-wide plan of action should pay balanced attention to both development and human rights and focus more on the improvement of the life of the indigenous communities in developed countries.

Thirdly, we must correctly understand the concept of indigenous peoples. This concept is a legacy of western colonial history. Not every country has indigenous people and indigenous people must not be confused with native dwellers. To muddle or distort this concept is not in line with the spirit of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, nor is it conducive to the promotion and protection of the rights and interests of genuine indigenous peoples.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.