

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**MR. WU HONGBO  
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

-----

**TWELFTH SESSION OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

**New York, 20 May 2013**

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,  
Honorable Elders,  
Distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Dear Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address the opening ceremony of the twelfth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. This is the first time I am participating in the Forum, since taking up my post last year as Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. Allow me to assure you at the outset that the Department will do its utmost to support the work of Forum.

The Permanent Forum is a unique body, established by the UN in response to demands from the indigenous peoples for a high level body specifically devoted to indigenous issues. The Forum coordinates the work of the UN system in addressing indigenous peoples' priorities in the areas of culture, education, environment, health, human rights and socio-economic development.

The United Nations has committed its unwavering support to a future where all indigenous peoples will enjoy peace, human rights and well-being. It has welcomed indigenous peoples as partners.

The establishment of the Permanent Forum, the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the establishment of a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the creation of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are all major achievements.

However, much work remains to be done in advancing the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples. This year the Forum will continue its discussions on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held in September 2014. These discussions are an

opportunity for Member States and Indigenous Peoples to continue the established practice of an inclusive process to find a common understanding on the contents of the outcome document.

I understand that consultations of indigenous peoples from around the world, as well as indigenous women and youth have taken place, as part of the preparations towards the world conference. I would like to recognize the tremendous efforts of indigenous peoples to organize and define their positions towards the Conference.

Distinguished delegates,

I thank the Government of the Republic of the Congo for hosting the pre-session meeting of the Permanent Forum in March this year, in Brazzaville. This is the first time the Forum has met in the African continent, and we highly appreciate your support.

I encourage other Member-States to also host the Forum. The pre-session meeting extends our outreach to the national and community level, and provides the Forum with a rich perspective on good practices in different parts of the world.

I take this opportunity to thank the Member States of Canada, Estonia, Denmark and Finland for their contribution to the Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues in 2012, which is deeply appreciated.

In addition, we also want to thank those who have contributed to the Small Grants Fund. These two Funds support the work of indigenous peoples on the ground, as well as the work of the Forum.

I hope we can continue to count on your support, and urge others to also contribute to the Trust Fund. Supporting the work of the Forum through contributing to the trust fund is particularly important with the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples coming up next year.

An evaluation of the small grants fund under the Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues, found it to be effective. It has enabled indigenous peoples from around the world to contribute to the goals and objectives of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. It is important that the UN continues to support these small, but significant efforts that are defined and implemented by indigenous peoples themselves.

Distinguished Chairperson and Members of the Forum,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Before closing, I would like to say a few words on the critical importance of the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the United Nations post-2015 development agenda. The process underway to advance a development agenda that has sustainable development at its core, represents a unique opportunity for a more comprehensive consideration of poverty and well-being that includes the indigenous perspective. It provides us the space to adopt a new partnership for development – built on the human rights-based approach. I believe that working together, we can achieve a real, inclusive and participatory post-2015 development agenda.

May your collective efforts lead to an increased awareness of the multiple issues facing your lives each and every day. I urge all of you to cooperate, and call on Member States to ensure the respect and recognition of indigenous peoples' rights throughout the world. I wish you a successful session.

Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*