

**UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Sixteenth Session
Thursday April 27, 2017
Agenda Item 4**

Speaker: Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild

The UN has adopted instruments that have contributed to a more robust strategy for sustainable development. The most significant is *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

Yet sustainable development has largely not taken place, despite the severe and ongoing impacts of resource development in regard to Indigenous peoples.

Sustainable development must ensure the protection of Indigenous peoples' human rights. Democracy, human rights, good governance and the rule of law are essential for sustainable development, including environmental protection and the *eradication of poverty*.

In view of the heightened vulnerability of Indigenous women and children, States must meet a higher standard and not impoverish those concerned. Development projects that undermine Indigenous peoples' own means of subsistence or otherwise adversely affect their right of self-determination would severely violate their human rights. Such developments constitute violations of international law.

In Canada, Call to Action 92 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls upon the corporate sector to "apply the principles, norms, and standards of the UN Declaration to policy and operational activities and commit to obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent before proceeding with economic development projects."

Recommendations:

The Permanent Forum should remind States of their international commitments "to end poverty and hunger everywhere; ... to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources". All resource development projects should adhere to these critical elements.

The Permanent Forum should emphasize to States that poverty represents a denial of human rights and human dignity. As repeatedly stressed by the General Assembly, there is "the need to ensure that no one is left behind, including indigenous peoples, who will benefit from and participate in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda" for sustainable development.

The Permanent Forum should underline to States that impacts of poverty are interrelated and compounded by unsustainable development. In particular, Indigenous women and families that are deprived of their collective and individual right to security, cultural identity, adequate housing and other essential services face situations that enhance vulnerabilities. Such situations often result in violence.

The Permanent Forum should reiterate that States must honour and respect Treaties with Indigenous peoples, as self-determining peoples, and safeguard Mother Earth for present and future generations. Upholding and protecting the human rights of Indigenous peoples, including Treaty rights, is a matter of legal responsibility. States and corporations must be held accountable for ensuring that resource development does not violate these rights.

The Permanent Forum should remind States that Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development and that Indigenous peoples' right to development is an integral part of their right to self-determination. Indigenous peoples are entitled to benefit from, and make decisions concerning, their territories.