

U.S. Statement at Informal Consultation on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, June 3 2014

Delivered by Terri Robl

Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation welcomes your leadership on the upcoming World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. The conference should be convened with the full and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples and they should be fully consulted with respect to its outcome.

The United States government has consulted closely, and will continue to consult closely with US-based indigenous peoples on matters that affect them. We have a few comments from the U.S. Government's perspective in related to the World Conference and its outcome document.

With respect to the issue of participation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations, The United States has consistently reiterated its support for meaningful indigenous participation in the UN. We agree with indigenous peoples that the existing arrangements for indigenous peoples' participation in the UN are not satisfactory. This is definitely true with respect to U.S. federally recognized tribes. U.S. federally recognized tribes are governments with inherent powers of self-governance, but in the UN setting these characteristics are not recognized.

We are committed to finding an appropriate response to this challenge. We will continue consulting with U.S.-based tribes, indigenous organizations, and member states to explore possible options.

We think a promising route, at this point in time and consistent with the UN Secretary General's 2012 report on the subject, may be to seek broadened and enhanced indigenous peoples' participation in UN meetings – not only in UN fora created especially for indigenous peoples' issues including the PFII and EMRIP, but also in meetings addressing development matters. We believe that member states and indigenous peoples can work together to come up with practical, achievable ways to reach this objective. We welcome continued dialogue with indigenous peoples to exchange view on this.

We agree with indigenous peoples that violence against indigenous women is a significant global problem that should be considered at the World Conference. It is critical to raise more awareness of this concern in the UN.

We would like to explore how the Human Rights Council's Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and Practice could be utilized to further the rights of indigenous women and girls.

There are existing mandates and mechanisms within the UN system that are already engaged in address violence against women and girls, including violence against indigenous women. We believe it is important to examine these before we make any determination about whether to establish new ones. Specifically, we welcome views on how these existing tools can be used more effectively to mitigate the problem.

With respect to cultural property, the United States has strong domestic laws protecting the human remains and cultural property of Native Americans and it strongly supports Native American efforts to stop the commercialization of protected Native American human remains and cultural property in other countries.

The domestic legislation of some countries inhibits the process of recovery and repatriation of protected Native American cultural property. In this regard, the full documentation of cultural property prior its illicit removal can greatly facilitate the recovery and repatriation of the cultural property. The United States is open to exploring ways in which the international community can better protect human remains and cultural property of indigenous peoples.