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**STATEMENT
BY
MR. SHA ZUKANG
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
AND COORDINATOR OF THE SECOND DECADE OF
THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**TO THE TENTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

New York, 16 May 2011

Excellencies,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,
Distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations,
Distinguished Elders,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to the Tenth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and offer a special welcome to new members of the Forum.

Protecting and guaranteeing the rights of indigenous peoples has proved to be a significant challenge over the last decade. However, unlike any other time in history, the issue is now on the global radar. Within the United Nations, this is evident through the work of the Permanent Forum and other mechanisms. The space for indigenous peoples at the United Nations has only grown over time.... largely due to the mobilization and solidarity of indigenous peoples, and the support of Member states and other partners.

Each year, this Forum is better attended. The number of participating Indigenous Peoples Organizations, Non-governmental Organizations, UN system partners and other intergovernmental organizations continues to grow. This is a reflection of the great commitment of all concerned to overcome the challenges of indigenous peoples around the world.

This increased participation is especially timely, as we welcome the adoption of the General Assembly resolution to organize the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held in 2014. I call upon member states, with the leadership of the President of the General

Assembly, to ensure the active participation of indigenous peoples in the Conference... at all stages... including in the preparatory processes and in deliberations for the outcome document.

Distinguished representatives,

It is also an honour for me to address you as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, which will be held in Brazil in June 2012. Rio+20 is a tremendous opportunity for indigenous peoples to share their wisdom with all of us. Indigenous peoples have a unique understanding of Mother Earth as a living entity, where all beings are interconnected and interdependent.

I strongly recommend that you – the indigenous groups here today - fully participate in the Rio +20 preparatory process through the Permanent Forum and CSD Major Groups. We need you to remind Member States that green economy initiatives should integrate all the dimensions of development, including the economic, social, political, ecological, cultural and spiritual considerations.

The Rio +20 Conference is an opportunity for Member States, the UN system and our partners to renew political commitments and sharpen focus on sustainable development. This requires strengthening the three pillars of sustainable development - social and economic, as well as environmental. In this regard, we must pay attention to the rights and priorities of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are among the most vulnerable, yet are also most severely impacted by climate change and the loss of lands, habitats and resources.

Honourable Members of the Permanent Forum, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to say a few words on the process of the Permanent Forum. I wish to commend the decision to hold in-depth dialogues with UN agencies. This year's dialogue is with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It will provide Forum Members and observers the opportunity to learn more about UNICEF's work with indigenous peoples and to discuss how it can be strengthened even further.

The Forum will also hold a dialogue with the Government of Colombia regarding the situation of the Awá people. This particular dialogue is born of the Forum's initiative to have in-depth discussions with Member States based on voluntary reports. I commend the commitment of member states to seek the Forum's advice on improving the situation of indigenous peoples in their countries. I am sure this discussion will be productive and useful for future sessions.

I would like to recognize the cooperation and support of the Office of the President of the General Assembly... in leading the discussion on the World Conference on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to be held in 2014. Let us exchange ideas on how to organize a successful conference with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples.

I would also like to thank the Government of Canada and the United States of America for hosting the pre-session meeting of the Permanent Forum in March. We highly appreciate your support.

And many thanks go to the Member States who made contributions to the Trust Fund of the Permanent Forum in 2010: Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, and Madagascar. I express my deep appreciation for your contribution. It is through this Trust Fund that we directly support indigenous peoples, as well as the work of the Forum. I urge other Member States to consider responding to our call for contributions.

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

The UN's commitment to the rights of indigenous peoples is evident through many channels: the establishment of the Permanent Forum, the adoption of the UN 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. These achievements play an important role in integrating indigenous issues throughout the United Nations system and in engaging Member States in this work. It is time to take decisive steps to emphasise inclusiveness with respect to indigenous peoples, and to make the Declaration a living document.

To all indigenous peoples—your energy, commitment, and support once again renew our hope that there is no limit to what we can accomplish - in your countries and your communities, and throughout the world.

For that I thank you, and I wish the Forum every success in your deliberations.
