

Draft 1 Speech for ECOSOC President at the twelfth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 20 May 2013

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished representatives of Member States, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations,

Distinguished representatives of the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations,

Distinguished Elders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to address the opening of the Twelfth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. I am pleased to see so many indigenous representatives here in the hall today. I am equally pleased to see so many Member State delegations that are coming to participate in the Permanent Forum. Indeed this is what the Economic and Social Council envisioned when it established the Forum thirteen years ago. The Permanent Forum is a remarkable body where indigenous peoples, Member States and the UN system come together in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation to exchange ideas, learn from one another and make concrete proposals to address the well-being of indigenous peoples across the globe. This will improve the relationship between indigenous peoples and governments. This is important work and the Economic and Social Council takes this work seriously.

Ladies and gentlemen.

This year the theme of the Council's Annual Ministerial Review is Science, technology and innovation and culture for sustainable development and the MDGs. It

is clear that we need an increased emphasis on indigenous peoples' who have a wealth of knowledge and technologies and how they contribute to science, technology and innovation. A great deal of indigenous traditional knowledge has been undermined and destroyed in through centuries of genocide, language loss, discrimination and when indigenous peoples have been forcibly removed from their territories. Despite this, indigenous peoples remain the custodians of many of the most biologically diverse areas in the world and their knowledge of medicine, agriculture, and the environment is increasingly recognized by scientists and academics as well as by industrial corporations and pharmaceutical companies.

Indigenous peoples have for centuries shared their knowledge with others, as collective goods for the benefit of humankind, not as private property to be protected and sold. There is a growing number of consumer products such as cosmetics, pharmaceutical drugs and handicrafts that are derived from indigenous traditional knowledge and that are sold by private corporations for profit while the original owners of this knowledge see little or no benefits at all.

Indeed, indigenous peoples have a huge contribution to make to the development of our societies and their knowledge and innovations can and should play a major role in our efforts, including the MDGs and in preparing the Post 2015 development agenda. Not in the form of products to be appropriated but as knowledge that leads to improved well-being for all, especially indigenous peoples themselves. This is why we must work together. This is why the Permanent Forum is here at the United Nations.

The Permanent Forum is an important member of the UN Family. The recommendations that have come from this vibrant body have already shaped the work of the UN system and it continues to inform and educate us all.

You have ahead of you two weeks of hard work and important discussions. I wish you good fortune in your work and I look forward to following the deliberations and the conclusions of the session. We at ECOSOC are committed to the success and impact of the Permanent Forum.

Thank you.