

UNITED NATIONS



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**STATEMENT
BY
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**TO THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

New York, 7 May 2012

Excellencies,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,
Honorable Elders,
Distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations,
Distinguished representatives of the UN system, other inter-governmental
organizations and of civil society,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to address the opening ceremony of the eleventh session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. It is truly a pleasure to see all of you here today.

The Permanent Forum is one of the best-attended sessions on the annual calendar of the United Nations. Indeed, May is a time of great energy and dynamics here at the United Nations Headquarters, when Indigenous Peoples, Non-governmental Organizations, UN system partners and other intergovernmental organizations ~~is~~ come together in a common effort and commitment to advance indigenous peoples rights around the world.

As you all know, next month the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), will be held to assess progress, gaps in implementation and to change unsustainable consumption patterns.

Rio+20 is the prime opportunity for the world community to reaffirm the role of all key segments of humanity, including indigenous peoples, and to strengthen their role in achieving sustainable development, in particular in a world threatened by climate change.

As we get closer to Rio+20, we must keep the Earth in full view when making decisions and taking action. All around the world, people are united in the hope for a balanced and more sustainable world, anchored on the inter-linked three pillars of sustainable development - social and economic, as well as environmental.

In this opportunity, I would like to share with you some observations of this process in order to achieve a strong expression of renewed commitment for sustainable development. This includes a commitment to agree on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as having a shared understanding of what is a green economy. These two agreements will have important implications for the future institutional framework for sustainable development.

Distinguished representatives,

During this eleventh session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, we will discuss a wide range of matters. I would like to draw your attention to the discussion on the special theme for the year "The Doctrine of Discovery: its

enduring impact on indigenous peoples and the right to redress for past conquests (articles 28 and 37 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)”.

Also, there are a number of half-day discussions such as: the rights of indigenous peoples to food and food sovereignty; and secondly, a discussion on indigenous peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia. There will also be a dialogue with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

For the preparations of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014, the Office of the President of the 66th session of the General Assembly will lead a dialogue. On this matter, I would like to recognize his office's cooperation and support. This important exchange of views will ensure and continue the established practice of an open and inclusive process of dialogue and consultations among and between Member States and Indigenous Peoples that occurred during the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Distinguished delegates,

And many thanks go to the Member States who made contributions to the Trust Fund of the Permanent Forum in 2011: Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia and the Philippines. 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. The Trust Fund gives priority to the main areas of the Second Decade: culture, education, health, human rights, the environment and social and economic

development. These priorities are in direct conjunction with the Millennium Development Goals and what we would like to achieve under the Sustainable Development Goals at Rio+20.

In supporting the Trust Fund you are supporting the realization of indigenous peoples' well-being and the eradication of poverty and inequality. I urge other Member States to consider responding to our call for contributions as the demand from indigenous peoples' around the world is increasing each year.

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

The increased attention by Member States is needed by creating legal frameworks that promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples, as well as adopting policy initiatives and programs to bring about changes on the ground to promote substantive equality and justice. 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 achievements that play an important role in integrating indigenous peoples' issues throughout the United Nations system and engaging Member States in this work. Although some progress has been made with respect to indigenous peoples' rights, much work remains to be done.

I wish you two weeks of stimulating discussions, joint learning, strategizing and new insights, so that we continue our work re-energized and with renewed determination.

Thank you
