

**High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to be known as  
the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples**

**Second round of consultations organized by the President of the General  
Assembly**

**Wednesday 16 July 2014**

**Opening intervention**

**Delivered by: Mr John Henriksen for the indigenous global coordinating group**

---

Thank you Mr/Madam Chair, for allowing the indigenous Global Coordinating Group (GCG) the opportunity to make our initial comments to the zero draft. These comments reflect the views of the indigenous regions of Africa, the Arctic, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pacific and Russia as well as the global indigenous women's caucus.

First, we would like to acknowledge the work of the President of the General Assembly (PGA) and his team of advisors in producing the zero draft which reflects certain recommendations from the Alta outcome document as well as recommendations made by indigenous peoples during the first round of consultations on 3 June and the interactive hearing on 17 and 18 June. We are ready to use this document as a basis for this consultation.

While this document provides a good foundation for this consultation, we believe that there is room for improvement. Generally speaking, we would like to see a document with greater and stronger commitments from states and the United Nations (UN) system, and less expressed aspirations. A number of the operative paragraphs are, in our reading, preambular in nature, and should be amended so that we produce an action oriented outcome document which the high level plenary meeting can adopt.

Mr/Madam Chair, as we move through the zero draft cluster by cluster, our regional indigenous peoples' representatives will make specific proposals for amendments to the various operative paragraphs. In our joint opening statement, the GCG would like, however, to identify what our most prioritized recommendations are, and what we regard to be the most critical language changes in the zero draft. Our most prioritized recommendations are:

- OP 13 regarding the oversight mechanism;
- OP 20 regarding the status and participation of indigenous peoples in the UN system;

Operative paragraphs 13 and 20 are our most prioritized recommendations. These must stay in the outcome document, in strengthened versions, that we will provide to you shortly.

Our other prioritized recommendations are as follows:

- OP 4, 5, 7, 22 and 24. This group of recommendations we read as a package that provides a solid basis for implementation of indigenous peoples' rights at the national level;
- OP 11 regarding disaggregation of data and population censuses;
- OP 18 on the appointment of a High Representative for Indigenous Peoples;
- OP 29 on traditional knowledge and traditional livelihoods; and
- OP 33 on demilitarization.

The most important language changes we seek in the zero draft are the following:

We think that OP 13, in its present form is too vague and not concrete. We therefore propose the following wording:

“Request the United Nations Human Rights Council, in cooperation with indigenous peoples, to consider recommending to the 71st session of the General Assembly possible ways to more effectively improving the United Nations capacity to promote respect for and full application of the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and follow up the effectiveness of the Declaration, through the creation a voluntary oversight mechanism, mandated to receive communications and offer opinions on the progress Member States have made in implementing the Declaration. In doing so, the Human Rights Council should also consider the possibility of amending the mandate and altering the composition of its subsidiary body – the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) – to enable the EMRIP to function as such an oversight mechanism for the Declaration. The creation of a voluntary oversight mechanism could be arranged through an Optional Protocol to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

Similarly, we think that OP 20 on the status of indigenous peoples and our participation in the UN system needs substantial strengthening and concretization. We propose the following language:

“Building on the report of the Secretary-General on ways and means of promoting participation at the United Nations of indigenous peoples’ representatives on the issues affecting them<sup>1</sup>, and the proposals it contains, requests the Secretary-General to prepare, to the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, specific proposals bestowing indigenous peoples with consultative and participatory status within the UN system, which would allow indigenous peoples’ traditional and elected self-government institutions, including indigenous peoples’ governments, congresses, assemblies and parliaments, to participate at the United Nations.”

---

<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/21/24.

Mr/Madam Chair, we support the proposal in the chapau that the Alta Outcome Document be annexed to the Outcome Document.

The regional indigenous peoples' representatives will in addition submit specific language changes to our other identified prioritized recommendations, and also specific language changes to some other provisions. These proposals represent consensus positions by the six regions that cooperate within the GCG, and we therefore expect the PGA, his advisors and member states to give them their most thoughtful considerations.

We will also submit all these proposals to the PGA's office in writing, and we are happy to share the written document with all other interested delegations.

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chair.