



**SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STATEMENT TO THE
16TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON
INDIGENOUS ISSUES (UNPFII),**

**DELIVERED BY THE
DEPUTY MINISTER OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND
TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MR OBED BAPELA**

28 APRIL 2017,

NEW YORK

Agenda Item 11: "Follow- up to the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples: (b) Ways to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations"

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Madame Chair,

When this august body, the United Nations was conceived in 1945, at the end of World War II, it was established as a forum for the peoples of the world with the main intention of resolving conflicts within and between nations. Its Constitution known as the Charter, is explicit in this regard.

Based on this foundation, the South African Government supports the full participation of Indigenous Peoples in all the relevant structures of the UN on issues affecting them, their plight and welfare.

The South African government wishes to appreciate all Indigenous peoples for the courage and commitment to protect the human rights that affects the indigenous lives.

Furthermore, we express gratitude to all the member states who are supporting the participation of the indigenous people in the UN relevant structures.

To this end, South Africa appreciates the genuine views expressed by these communities in the session convened by the President of the General Assembly on Wednesday, 26 April 2017. We look forward to the continuation of the consultations scheduled for Wednesday, 03 May 2017. Even though this will not be the conclusion of these processes, we are keen to see tangible progress being registered in this regard.

Insofar as the future processes are concerned, we share the views already expressed that, as a minimum, the advisors appointed by the President of the General Assembly should continue to lead and actively participate in this process to its logical conclusion. Madame Chair, it would defeat the very essence of the UNDRIP particularly the core

principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent if Indigenous Peoples were not to become part and parcel of the United Nation processes on issues which impact their lives and livelihoods.

In our humble view, the current text of the Resolution aimed at realizing this noble objective should be inclusive, transparent and must take into account the views of Indigenous Peoples.

As I conclude- the father of our democracy Nelson Mandela taught us that "*it always seems impossible until it's done*".

I thank you!!!