

*Press Release*



(Please check against delivery)

Statement by Mr. Eiji Yamamoto

Minister of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

First Meeting of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Agenda Item 5: General Statement

22 May 2002

New York

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is my great pleasure and honor to make a brief statement at this historic first session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Since this is the first time for my delegation to address the Forum, we would like to congratulate all members of the Forum on their appointment, and congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on being elected to preside over this body. We thank the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights for all the preparations that went into making this meeting possible and thereby providing us with the opportunity to come together on this important subject.

The Government of Japan welcomes the establishment of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The establishment of this body is one of the most significant achievements of the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

Japan attaches importance to indigenous issues. For this reason, it has joined and continues to join the efforts of the international community to promote the cause of the indigenous issues. In this regard, Japan has participated in meetings in this area, such as those of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights as well as the Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. And it is my delegation's great pleasure and honor that Professor Yuji Iwasawa is serving as one of the governmental experts in the Permanent Forum.

The Permanent Forum has a broad mandate within the mandate of the ECOSOC. That mandate is to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights. In this regard, my delegation believes that for the success of the Permanent Forum, it is crucial that it cooperate and coordinate with relevant UN and international agencies in order to make the best use of their expertise. At the same time, however, it is necessary for the Forum to show respect for those agencies, so that such good cooperation and coordination will be possible.

The Permanent Forum should be provided with appropriate secretariat service. My delegation is of the view that the structure of the secretariat service should be considered thoroughly, making the best use possible of the existing mechanism.

The Permanent Forum has just begun its work, and we intend to follow its progress closely. It is our hope that the Permanent Forum will make a great contribution to the promotion and protection of the situation of indigenous people around the world.

Thank you very much.