

STATEMENT UNFPA

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Sixteenth session

New York, 2017

**Agenda item 8 – Tenth anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:
measures taken to implement the Declaration.**

Madame Chair,
Distinguished Members of the Forum,
Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Indigenous friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of United Nations Population Fund, I would like to thank the Distinguished Members of the Forum for this opportunity to address the Forum.

UNFPA works on the rights of indigenous peoples within the context of our mandate, in more than 150 countries and territories that are home to the vast majority of Indigenous peoples, as well as at the regional and global level. As we commemorate the **Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and reflect on measures taken to implement the Declaration**, I would like to highlight the work that UNFPA does around the world to help translate the vision of the Declaration into reality for the lives of indigenous peoples.

UNFPA through our programming and advocacy efforts, strives to promote indigenous peoples equal **right to health (art. 24) , including their sexual and reproductive health**, such as maternal health and family planning, to have access to these services free from discrimination; and to ensure that **indigenous women and children enjoy full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination (art 22)**. In all areas of our work, we emphasize the **participation of indigenous peoples in the policies and programmes that affect their rights, (art. 18)** particular indigenous women and youth; two key populations which will be focused upon in a special session of this Forum.

UNFPA has been supporting the efforts of governments and indigenous women's organizations to establish culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive health

models and services, with full participation of indigenous peoples in their design. This has contributed to an increased use of and a higher degree of satisfaction with public services as they have become more culturally acceptable. These interventions have reduced maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS prevalence and incidence among women and female adolescents.

One of the key challenges in addressing the health needs of indigenous women and girls, is the lack of data on their health status. In many parts of the world, indigenous peoples are invisible because national statistic systems do not disaggregate information, or simply because their indigenous identity is not recognized. For instance, whilst the main international surveys that collect data on health in middle- and low-income countries, offer the option to disaggregate data by ethnicity, it is not routinely collected or analysed. UNFPA, has been working to strengthen the knowledge base on the problems faced by indigenous peoples through strengthening research and data collection on their situation. As a direct follow up to the recommendation from the 15th Indigenous Peoples Forum, and in collaboration with UNICEF and UN-Women, UNFPA is developing a **Fact Sheet on Indigenous Women's Maternal Health and Morbidity**. The Fact Sheet aims to raise the visibility of the high rate of Maternal Mortality and Morbidity among indigenous women, particularly adolescent girls; to compile data on the maternal health status of indigenous women; and to demonstrate the need to strengthen health systems, including data on sexual and reproductive health and rights more broadly for indigenous women and girls. We look forward to presenting the Fact Sheet to the Members of the Forum later this year.

As a 2013 joint study on violence against indigenous girls, adolescents and young women titled: **Breaking the Silence on Violence against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and young Women** revealed, indigenous women and girls are more likely to suffer **gender based violence** than non-indigenous women and girls, including those with disabilities. Generic policies and programmes to prevent and address violence against women risk overlooking indigenous women and girls if their status and specific realities are not recognised from the outset. **The Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence**, launched in December 2013 covers women across the spectrum, but has a special focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized, including indigenous women and girls. The Programme takes a multi-sectoral approach to gender based violence, underpinned by strategies to empower, inform and develop capacities of women and girls to mitigate violence and to support strategic partnership, impactful laws, policies and justice and healing for survivors.

UNFPA has a track record of working together with government and indigenous people's to ensure that their worldviews and cultural perspective are integrated in national legal, policy and institutional frameworks. At the country level there are various ways in which UNFPA supports the **meaningful participation** of indigenous peoples, in particular women and youth:

For example in **Nicaragua**, UNFPA has supported the establishment of a round table of youth from indigenous groups and Garifuna people (Afro-descendants) to enable these groups to speak up on and identify their priorities on sexual and reproductive health issues with the participation of state actors;

In **Honduras**, UNFPA has been supporting indigenous and Garifuna people (Afro-descendants) to speak up on how sexual and reproductive health services could be more culturally acceptable and youth and adolescent friendly. As a result, the Government has developed a national plan to prevent early pregnancy among adolescents and youth, with a focus on the specific situation of indigenous groups.

Moreover, as emphasized in ICPD Programme of Action, promoting **male involvement** is key to achieving gender equality and shared responsibility in all areas of family life and reproductive health. In **Guatemala**, UNFPA and partners implemented programmes that worked with indigenous boys to cultivate more gender-equitable, supportive male attitudes and behavior towards women and girls.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development, which calls upon all of us to intensify our work to ensure that no one is left behind, provides us with an opportunity to accelerate our efforts to support the implementation of the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As UNFPA moves into its new Strategic Plan for 2018-2021, empowering indigenous peoples, with a focus on girls, women and young people, to exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to be free from discrimination and violence will be a central part of our work.