



GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA

STATEMENT

BY

**THE HONOURABLE MRS. VALERIE GARRIDO-LOWE, M.P.,
MINISTER WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' AFFAIRS**

AT THE

**SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES (UNPFII)**

**Agenda Item II: Follow-up to the outcome document of the World Conference on
Indigenous Peoples**

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS

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Madam Chair

I am once again pleased to take the floor as we continue our deliberations at this Session of the Forum and I wish to express my appreciation to you and your team for the way in which you have guided our work thus far. Please be assured of my delegation's continued support.

Madam Chair

Consistent with the agenda item currently being considered, allow me to highlight two of the major policy initiatives that the Government of Guyana is implementing in an effort to ensure that the platform for the enjoyment of Indigenous rights is further strengthened.

Guyana commits to ensuring the full protection of the rights of the Indigenous peoples in the Constitution of Guyana which is the supreme law of Guyana and in all other relevant laws but in particular the AMERINDIAN ACT which is the primary legislation governing the affairs of the Indigenous Peoples of Guyana.

The Government has accepted that there is need to either revise or repeal the Act and to amend the name of the updated legislation to THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT. Our intention is to enact legislation that is fully compliant with current international human rights law.

In order to achieve this, the Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, is preparing to begin the process of consultations with all relevant stakeholders with a view to an early finalization of the new legislation.

Madam Chair,

The second initiative I wish to highlight relates to the question of land titling. This issue has been addressed with an appreciable measure of success since Guyana gained its independence in 1966. My Government remains committed to upholding its legal obligations to ensure that the lands, territories and resources of our Indigenous Peoples are legally recognized under applicable international human rights law and we are keen on ensuring that the titling of traditional lands is done fully respecting the right to free, prior and informed consent.

We have made much progress on this issue as evidenced by the fact that there are currently one hundred and four (104) titled villages, representing some fifteen point six two percent (15.62%) of the total territory of Guyana. In collaboration with UNDP, the Government is continuing the land titling exercise.

Madam Chair,

There remain some outstanding issues regarding the titling of Indigenous lands and in order to address these in a holistic manner, our President established a Commission of Enquiry on 10 March 2017 "to examine and make recommendations to resolve" these issues.

I thank you, **Madam Chair.**