



**Delegation of the European Union  
to the United Nations**

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**Permanent Mission of Spain  
to the United Nations**

**Statement on behalf of the European Union**

by

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**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

**Ninth session**

**Item 3: Discussion of the special theme of the year:**

**Indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity:**

**Articles 3 and 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**New York, Tuesday 20 April, 2010**

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, distinguished delegates...

Thank you for giving me the floor. The EU is pleased to be able to address the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for the first time.

This Forum is an important venue for the promotion of dialogue between Governments, the UN and indigenous peoples, and the EU would like to take this opportunity to express its support for the work of the Forum. The EU congratulates Mr Carlos Mamani Condori for his election as the chairperson of this Forum.

A pillar of the European integration is to build respect for its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, as part of the enhancement of Europe's cultural heritage. From this perspective, we are inherently interested in the proceeding of this session, which is focused on development with culture and identity.

The European Union is also founded on the values of respect for human dignity, equality and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The EU is committed to these values, as well as to the combating of discrimination and social exclusion, both within Europe and in its relations with the wider world.

In concrete terms, in application of the powers conferred by the Treaties, the European Union has put in place within its borders a legal framework to fight discrimination, racism and xenophobia and launched financial programs to support activities aimed at combating these phenomena on the ground.

The European Union has made human rights a central aspect of its external relations: be it in the political dialogues it holds with third countries, be it in its action in multilateral fora such as the United Nations or in its development policy and assistance. Indigenous issues form an integral part of the European Union's human rights policy. The principles of the European Union's engagement towards indigenous peoples are applied in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The adoption of the Declaration in 2007 has advanced the rights and ensured the continued development of indigenous peoples around the world.

In a number of countries, indigenous peoples continue to be marginalized and discriminated against and many still live in poverty. Their voices are not always heard when economic development plans are formulated. During the past decades, the international community has gradually taken concrete steps to raise awareness of the situation of the world's indigenous peoples and to facilitate dialogue with their representatives. The creation of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was an important step in promoting this dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to indigenous peoples, which contributed to the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The EU encourages States to facilitate the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, by, inter alia, translating it into the languages of indigenous peoples in their respective countries in order to raise awareness among different actors of its provisions. The EU also attaches importance and closely follows the work of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Human Rights Council and of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People in relation to the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.

The principles of the European Union's engagement towards indigenous peoples are applied in the context of the aforementioned Declaration. Indigenous peoples' issues are mainstreamed into the European Commission's development cooperation strategies. For example, the EC Colombia Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 addresses the humanitarian and human rights situation of indigenous population and includes among its key priorities peace building through the involvement of vulnerable citizens in local governance and participatory economy. The EU is also enhancing awareness of indigenous issues among its staff. A European Commission study titled 'Civil society mapping in Asia', focusing on Nepal, will analyze the role of indigenous organizations within Nepal and make recommendations on how to include such organizations in the European Union's policy dialogue and programming cycle.

Direct support for civil society organizations working on indigenous issues is provided through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The projects funded by this Instrument are targeted at international organizations, NGOs and indigenous organizations. For example, support is provided to indigenous peoples and their representatives in participating in the UN activities relating to indigenous peoples. The

EIDHR also supports the activities on documentation and research on indigenous peoples issues.

In the context of the Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, the European Commission invited proposals addressing deforestation and forest degradation in a recent call for proposals under the Environment Thematic Programme. Through the promotion of good governance and sustainable management of forests, these proposals should benefit forest-dependent local and indigenous communities and support the participation of civil society organisations, indigenous people organisations and other non state actors, in the preparation, negotiation and/or implementation of Voluntary Partnership Agreements between the EU and third countries on the trade of timber.

Mr Chairperson,

Despite progress, there is little reason for complacency. In particular, I would like to point out that many indigenous peoples are especially affected by climate change, as they might live in some of the most fragile and vulnerable ecosystems. Climate change can threaten the very survival of many indigenous peoples and it affects traditional lifestyles and cultures. The European Union recognizes that cooperation with and support for the establishment of partnerships with indigenous peoples contributes to promotion of human rights but also to sustainable development. The European Union continues to participate actively in the initiatives in the framework of the Convention of Biological Diversity for supporting local and indigenous peoples in their contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Effective participation of indigenous peoples in projects relating to their development needs to be based on their free prior and informed consent so as to further promote the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The European Union looks forward to the debate during this session of the Forum.

Thank you.