

Statement of Permanent Representative of Estonia Mr. Sven Jürgenson at the High-level event to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

25 April 2017

Mr. Chair, dear representatives of the indigenous peoples, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to express my thanks to the president of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting. Since its adoption, Estonia has strongly supported the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the System-Wide Action Plan. And we will continue to do so.

As we all know, culture is often the most significant determinant of one's identity and heritage. However, identity begins to disappear when languages are forgotten and cultures are impeded. The question is – how can we help to promote and revitalize indigenous cultures and protect the diverse heritage of the world? Estonia believes that the answer lies with younger generations and an effective use of ICT. As some indigenous cultures may become more secluded over time, ICT acts as a powerful tool, enabling younger generations to connect, raise awareness, educate and take action in order to cultivate their language, traditions and overall environments. Estonia would like to see ICT initiatives, that help to give younger generations the ability and encouragement to become more involved in making sure that their culture grows and develops with the changing world around them.

Mr. Chair,

The preservation of diverse cultures and languages of small nations can only be possible if there is strong support for it from both social and governmental levels. Indigenous Peoples' organizations should be free to choose their agenda based on the development and needs of their peoples and should not be targeted to political agenda. Any cooperation and contact between indigenous peoples and their organizations must be supported by all member states. In this regard, Estonia believes that greater participation of indigenous peoples' representatives in UN processes affecting them is essential. Therefore, we would like to commend the excellent work of the Advisors helping the President of the General Assembly to hold consultations on this important topic. We hope that the outcome of the consultations, a relevant resolution, will soon be adopted by this Assembly.

The future of indigenous peoples is particularly close to Estonian hearts. We continue to make commitments both at global and domestic levels. Estonia is an annual contributor to the Permanent Forum and Voluntary Fund for the Indigenous Peoples. This year, as we celebrate the 10 years of the Declaration, we hope to leave an even stronger input – we are currently introducing the small and diverse cultures of the Finno-Ugric people with our exhibition in the Visitor's Lobby and on the 26th of April at 6.15pm in the Conference Room 4, we will show a documentary on the Finno-Ugric People to which you all are invited to attend.

Mr. Chair, dear representatives of the indigenous peoples, ladies and gentlemen,

The world today is larger and more accessible to us than ever before, however we cannot let it become culturally poorer. With the right tools, help and support, hopefully, the 10th anniversary of the Declaration will inspire much more change to come.

Thank you.