



Check against delivery

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

**REMARKS TO UN PERMANENT FORUM
ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

New York, 20 April 2015

Mr. Chair,

**Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum and
Representatives of Indigenous Peoples',
Excellencies,**

**Dear Representatives of the UN system, Representatives of
other inter-governmental organizations and of Civil Society,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I am honoured to be with you today at the opening of the
fourteenth session of the UN Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues.**

**On behalf of the Secretary-General, I offer sincere
congratulations to the Members of the Permanent Forum.
Through the years, we have seen the Forum gain in
recognition and results. Today, the Permanent Forum is
widely regarded as an effective and representative arena for
deliberation on the rights and roles of indigenous peoples,
not least from the global development perspective.**

**The Forum provides a strong platform for decision-
makers and partners to embrace the vision and aspirations
of indigenous peoples.**

Last year's World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was a historic milestone in the relationship between indigenous peoples and Member States. It was inspiring and gratifying to see how you worked side by side, setting the direction for a strengthened partnership.

Member States reaffirmed their support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and agreed to a set of goals and commitments. This relates to a range of critical measures on health, education, land and territories. It also involves traditional knowledge systems, subsistence activities, economies and livelihoods, as well as national action plans. The right of indigenous peoples to determine their development priorities was clearly recognized.

Member States also agreed to address the participation of indigenous peoples at the United Nations. I count on Member States and indigenous peoples to identify creative solutions to enhance indigenous peoples' engagement on issues affecting them, directly or indirectly.

The World Conference outcome document calls on the United Nations to take a number of steps. One of them is the development of a system-wide action plan, to ensure coherence in achieving the aims of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Secretary-General has appointed our Chair today, Mr. Wu Hongbo, the Under Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to coordinate this effort. Work has already begun, and you will hear more on this during the discussions later today.

This year, the Permanent Forum will focus on the economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous peoples. The UN Declaration affirms their rights to health, education, clean drinking water and sanitation. It also states that these services must be provided in ways that are culturally appropriate and take into account indigenous peoples' ways of life. This often, as we know, involves living in remote areas within traditional lands.

Let us strive to ensure that the economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous peoples are fulfilled – rights that are essential to basic dignity and even to survival.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2015 is a critical year for the United Nations. We will mark the Organization's 70th anniversary, define a new development agenda and strengthen our efforts to tackle climate change.

The future well-being of the world's indigenous peoples is a crucial part of this critical year. We have made substantial progress. There are three mechanisms devoted to indigenous issues: first, the Permanent Forum, the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; secondly, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and thirdly, the World Conference successfully held last September. Yet there is much more to be done.

I call on Member States to make sure the post-2015 development agenda includes the situation and rights of indigenous peoples. Now is the time for indigenous peoples to be at the forefront of a transformative agenda that leaves no one behind.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to indigenous peoples.

I count on all of you – Member States, Indigenous Peoples and other partners – to make change happen and stand up for a life of dignity for all.

We must all work together to make the Declaration a reality. This is a task and a mission in the true spirit of the UN Charter.

I wish you a successful Session.

Thank you.