

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)**  
**20<sup>th</sup> Session, 19-30 April, 2021**

**Agenda Item 6: Thematic dialogues: Follow up to the outcome document of the World Conference on  
Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**  
**Friday 23 April 9-11 AM (EST)**

***Presentation by the Janene Yazzie, International Indian Treaty Council, Co-Convenor of the  
Indigenous Peoples Major Group***

Respectful Greetings and thank you (Madame Chair),

I'm coming to you from the occupied territories of my people and the Zuni People, also known as Na Nizhoozi (or *Gallup*) in New Mexico. I have the honor of serving as Co-Convenor of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development on behalf of International Indian Treaty Council. I appreciate the opportunity to address the members of the Forum on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the impacts of the pandemic, which we have heard about this first week of the Forum, it is critical that the United Nations Economic and Social Council (or ECOSOC) and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the Sustainable Development Goals are more impactful as our globe wrestles with the economic and educational inequalities, food insecurities, health disparities and increase in gender-based violence and other issues exacerbated by the impacts of the pandemic. These disparities impact all the areas addressed by goals of the 2030 Agenda, and the interventions this past week have shown the disproportionate impact to the world's Indigenous peoples regardless of whether they are in so-called developed countries or developing nations, indicating that Indigenous Peoples are still being furthest left behind in all areas addressed by the 2030 Agenda.

Part of the challenge we face in making meaningful progress, is the voluntary nature of commitments to implementation. When it comes to developed nations, it is particularly disparaging that the United States has yet to meaningfully engage in the implementation of the SDGs. With the new administration making bold commitments to address climate change and rejoining the Paris Agreement, we hope that the same enthusiasm can be extended to implementing the interlinking goals of the 2030 Agenda. This week we witnessed the historic address of Secretary Debra Haaland, becoming the highest ranking Indigenous Women in the United States Government to address the forum. We appreciate the Forum members adopting the theme on SDG 16 as the remarks shared by Secretary Haaland sparks hope that her appointment can usher in a new era of federal relations with Indigenous Peoples in implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and that the United States truly fully adopts and implements, without conditions, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We look forward to any opportunity to work with Secretary Haaland on the realization of the administrations climate goals and agree with her statement that "It is Indigenous resilience and worldview that every government, country, and community can learn from".

But there is much work to be done. The Voluntary National Reports submitted by other North America, Arctic and Pacific Countries have served as starting points for evaluation of the

meaningful involvement of Indigenous Peoples in developing sustainable solutions, leading in many cases, to more involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the VNRs such as has been the case in Finland and Norway. However, in the case of Canada, whose 2018 VNR mentioned Indigenous Peoples 112 times, consultation in SDG processes does not necessarily lead to the advancement of Indigenous Rights on the ground as many First Nations peoples continue to struggle for the recognition of their land rights and right to water in protection of their Lands, territories and resources from harmful pipeline development. These realities demonstrate the importance of enhanced participation of Indigenous Peoples in the High-Level Political Forum, as often that is the main avenue for Indigenous Peoples to present the reality of their situation on the ground.

For all these reasons I present the following recommendations to the Forum members:

1. In alignment with the statement offered by Secretary Deb Haaland we ask the forum members to advise ECOSOC on the importance of Indigenous Peoples representation in the High-Level Political Forum. Right now, we share limited spots in Expert Group Meetings, informal and formal meetings on the 2030 Agenda, and other activities of the HLPF with the other nine major groups representing Civil Society. This severely limits representation of Indigenous Peoples from the 7 socio-cultural regions represented by the Indigenous Peoples Major Group, which is further limited by the lack of language translation in Expert Group Meetings and informal meetings. We recommend that all High-level formal and informal meetings include a reserved seat for Indigenous Peoples and further recommend the provision of translation services so that participation is not only limited to English-speaking peoples; and
2. As the theme of this year's forum is SDG 16 "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions", we echo the call to end the criminalization of land rights and human rights defenders. There can be no meaningful involvement of Indigenous Peoples in implementing the 2030 Agenda if they face state-sanctioned violence and criminalization when exercising their right to protect their lands, territories, resources, and peoples when it comes to development issues; and
3. We recommend that Forum members work with the Indigenous Peoples Major Group to further provide guidance to ECOSOC on how to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, build off best practices demonstrated by certain countries and their VNRs who are developing mechanisms of meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples in meeting the 2030 Agenda, and to address long-standing issues and challenges around the need for disaggregated data, recognition for Indigenous Peoples' Land and Resource rights, recognition of collective Rights and Traditional Knowledge, and recognition of the inherent rights to self-determination, treaty rights, and the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent in all development activities and plans.

Indigenous Peoples must be involved in monitoring and implementing the SDGs at both the country and UN levels to address these shortfalls and ensure that these and other rights are protected. As goal measured objectives the 2030 Agenda represents the opportunity for the operationalization of global commitments. Let us use that opportunity to the best of our ability

to further enhance the rights of Indigenous Peoples at a time when the world most needs our solutions and wisdom.