

# STATEMENT

16<sup>th</sup> Session on the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues



International  
Labour Office

*Check against delivery*

26 April 2017

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## STATEMENT BY

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### ***Item 4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***

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Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ILO is working towards furthering indigenous and tribal peoples' well-being and rights under the umbrella of the Decent Work Agenda, which includes Convention No. 169 and other ILO standards, as well as the ILO's 2015 strategy for action regarding indigenous and tribal peoples. The strategy recognizes the linkages between rights, and inclusive and sustainable development, including access to decent work, and the protection of the environment.

At the same time, the ILO is addressing the links between climate change and the world of work, while taking into account how climate changes shapes the economic, political, social and cultural lives of indigenous and tribal peoples.

The ILO has been studying the impacts on indigenous peoples, of climate change, as well as of policies aimed at addressing climate change that exclude indigenous groups. Our findings show that the threats to indigenous peoples' access to decent work are severe.

The ILO's [new report](#) on this subject, which will be launched today, highlights that indigenous peoples share a unique combination of characteristics that makes them particularly vulnerable to climate change. These include:

- Disproportionate impacts of poverty and inequality;
- Erosion of indigenous peoples' natural resource-based livelihoods;
- Residence in geographical areas exposed to climate change;
- Migration and forced displacement that enhances their reliance on the informal economy;
- Gender inequality both within and outside of their communities;
- And, the lack of recognition, rights, institutional support, and inclusion in public policies by States.

Combined, these characteristics place indigenous peoples in a uniquely vulnerable position in the world of work, including when compared to the poor more generally. And therefore this situation also poses a formidable challenge to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ILO's report however also finds that viewing indigenous peoples only as 'victims' is an incomplete picture. While they do indeed face severe threats from climate change, they also have a critical role to play in ensuring effective climate action and spurring green growth.

As agents of change, indigenous peoples are already at the forefront of combating climate change, which is clearly reflected in their occupations and work. From agriculture and fisheries, to sustainably managing forests, their contributions to a modern green economy are tremendous.

The ILO's report thus stresses that indigenous peoples share certain unique ways of interacting with their surroundings, which are critical for both effective climate mitigation and adaptation, and their traditional knowledge can provide important socio-technological solutions to building resilient societies. As workers, employers and innovators, they can make strong contributions towards green innovation, generating green jobs, and enhancing green growth.

However, for indigenous peoples to be 'empowered' agents of change and partners, ensuring their access to decent work opportunities is critical. Securing their rights and access to lands; ensuring access to social protection and opportunities to build enterprises and cooperatives; ending gender inequalities; and building alliances are among some of the initial steps that are necessary.

The ILO looks forward to continued reflection and dialogue on these issues and stands ready as a partner and ally in addressing the challenges faced by indigenous peoples from climate change, and to support them in effectively combating it.