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Official Records

*President:* Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

*The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.*

## World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

### Agenda item 65

#### Rights of indigenous peoples

##### High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

##### Draft resolution (A/69/L.1)

**The President:** The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, the first ever convened, is truly a historic event. It is a great privilege and honour to welcome everyone present in the General Assembly today.

At the outset, let me pay tribute to the indigenous peoples of this land — the Haudenosaunee, also known as the Six Nations or Iroquois. I also wish to send a warm embrace to indigenous peoples around the world. I am truly honoured to preside over this Conference, which must focus on the challenges facing indigenous peoples and on renewed commitments by Member States to address them.

The World Conference on Indigenous Peoples is a culmination of the dynamic interface between the United Nations and the indigenous peoples of the world over the past 50 years. The process leading to this Conference has been unprecedented in the history of the Organization, as it has involved the active participation of indigenous peoples in its preparation

as well as cooperation between Member States and indigenous peoples in the preparation of the draft outcome document. We are indeed heartened by the inclusive nature of the preparatory process, which bodes well for the implementation of post-Conference commitments.

For more than 30 years, indigenous peoples' issues have been a preoccupation at the United Nations. Negotiations between Member States and indigenous leaders, under the auspices of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, were indeed long and protracted, but they eventually led to the General Assembly's adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.

Most important, the Declaration represents a global consensus on indigenous peoples' rights and affirms their right to self-determination. Furthermore, it accords pre-eminence to collective rights in international human rights law and serves to galvanize international attention on the protection of both the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples.

It is important to note the valuable contributions of the institutional arrangements that have served to translate the objectives of the Declaration into reality and fostered specific policies on how the United Nations should engage with and support the aspirations of indigenous peoples. Particularly, I would like to mention the contributions of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, the Special

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Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

At a national level, there have been many declarations of commitments, policies and legislative actions to improve the conditions of indigenous peoples. Yet there continues to be a deep chasm between those commitments and reality. The World Conference should serve as a turning point for translating the Declaration into concrete action.

The draft outcome document, which we will adopt today, is another pact between indigenous peoples and Member States that builds on the Declaration. It is carefully crafted and comprises many action-oriented commitments directed towards addressing the gaps in the implementation of the Declaration. Included among the commitments are a system-wide action plan to ensure coherence in the various efforts towards realization of the provisions of the Declaration, as well as a call for enhancing the participation of indigenous peoples and their representative institutions at the United Nations.

This World Conference is an opportunity for Member States to engage indigenous peoples in a more strategic and beneficial manner. That will require Member States to make greater efforts to translate the draft outcome document into reality and to demonstrate resolve in addressing inequities that adversely affect indigenous communities. Member States must also follow through on capacity-building commitments that will allow indigenous peoples to manage their own affairs.

In conclusion, let me urge Member States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to make a renewed commitment towards strategic partnership with indigenous peoples to help in their quest for a sustainable future,

I now give the floor to Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

**The Secretary-General:** I wish to thank those attending for coming to the United Nations for this historic, first-ever World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. I am going to greet the General Assembly in a few indigenous languages. I am sorry that I cannot speak in every language represented in the Assembly, but please consider this my way of welcoming each person.

*Takahi* (Taíno — Latin America), *Aweh* (South Africa), *Kia ora* (New Zealand), *Buorre beaivvi* (Saami — Norway and Sweden), *Hao* (Lakota — North America), *Kopisanangani* (Dusun-Sabah, Malaysia).

This is the most important week of the year at the United Nations, and this Conference is one of our most important events because it connects so much of our most critical work. Indigenous peoples are concerned about issues that top the global agenda. They are deeply connected to Mother Earth, whose future is at the heart of the Climate Summit opening tomorrow. Indigenous peoples are central to our discourse on human rights and global development. The Assembly's deliberations and decisions will reverberate across the international community with concrete effects in the lives of indigenous people. The success of this Conference is integral to progress for all humankind.

*(spoke in Spanish)*

In order to prepare myself for this Conference, I met with many indigenous leaders to listen to the things they were concerned about and to learn from their experiences.

In June, I went to Bolivia, a country that has made enormous progress in the areas of the rights of indigenous peoples. President Morales was a decisive driving force for this conference.

The people of El Torno were very warm and generous. I was very much impressed by their wealth of culture. They taught me about the relationship of respect between indigenous peoples and nature. This could be summed up in the expression that I adopted in Bolivia: "Good living," which means to live well, but in a simpler way.

*(spoke in English)*

In July, I held talks with indigenous leaders in Costa Rica. The former Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, Eduardo Ulibarri, also actively promoted this conference. We had a meaningful, open discussion. I listened closely to what the indigenous leaders had to say. They were worried about land, resources and their rights. I repeated my pledge to address the exclusion and marginalization facing many indigenous peoples around the world.

Earlier this month, I was in New Zealand, where I travelled to Taupo to spend a day with Maori leaders. They were using their great respect for nature to build

prosperity. I was impressed by their multimillion-dollar horticulture, waste-management and energy-production companies. I will never forget how every bit of waste is fed to worms that create very rich organic fertilizer. That is sustainability in action. It showed how much the world can learn from indigenous peoples.

I will continue visiting indigenous communities and hearing from their leaders, and they will always have a home at the United Nations. I am proud that the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295) during my first year in office. That set minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous peoples. More and more countries are reflecting those principles in their laws and constitutions. United Nations agencies have also developed specific policies to guide our work for indigenous peoples, and we are joining forces with indigenous peoples to reach our common goals.

I am pleased to welcome representatives of our leading experts, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I am sure they would agree that it is important to get pledges from Governments — but it is even more important to see actions. That is why I am encouraged that the draft conference outcome document (A/69/L.1) contains action-oriented commitments to bridge the gap between promises and results. I thank all the indigenous peoples and Governments that cooperated in good faith to produce that draft. And I expect Member States to meet their commitments, including by carrying out national action plans to realize our shared vision.

I welcome the outcome document's direct requests to me. I will also consult the rest of the United Nations system on the way forward. We will work closely with all of the indigenous peoples and the Member States. The outcome document also requests that I develop concrete proposals to enable indigenous peoples and their institutions to more directly participate in our United Nations activities. That is critical for indigenous communities — and for our world. The outcome document also asks me to appoint a high-level official on indigenous peoples. I will give that my most serious consideration. The United Nations will do everything possible to support indigenous peoples — and we count on their engagement in our global drive for a more sustainable future.

I began with greetings in a few indigenous languages. I know there are thousands of others. Some

of them are in danger of extinction. I am proud that the Declaration has been translated beyond the United Nations' six official languages into 50 other languages. I hope we can add many more to the long list. At the same time, I count on the indigenous peoples to speak with one voice. A long-time indigenous activist and former member of the Permanent Forum, Tonya Gonnella Frichner, once said: "Indigenous peoples all speak many different languages but in our meetings, we are speaking one language. Our relationship to Mother Earth is identical."

I urge the indigenous peoples to join their voices in a harmonious chorus to secure their rights and protect our planet. The United Nations stands with them in this struggle.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General for his multilingual statement.

The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

**President Morales Ayma** (*spoke in Spanish*): I offer special wishes to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to the President of the General Assembly, to all the representatives of States Members of the United Nations and to the representatives of the indigenous peoples of the world who are here and those who are listening to this first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

First, on behalf of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, I would like to thank and congratulate the Secretary-General for having ensured for us the convening of this first official summit of the United Nations on indigenous peoples. I would like to say to all here, and to those listening, that the fundamental principles of the indigenous movement are life, Mother Earth and peace. Those fundamental principles of indigenous peoples throughout the world are constantly being threatened by a system, the capitalist system, a model of how one can put an end to life and Mother Earth itself. That is why I want to say to all of my brothers and sisters that I have come here to share with them some experiences that I have had during my short period of ruling Bolivia as a President who comes from the social movement, the indigenous people's movement.

In the history of Bolivia, indigenous people have been the most hated, humiliated, vilified, marginalized and discriminated against. Thanks to the struggle and awareness of my brothers, not just the indigenous

movement but also the social movements have had an opportunity to share experiences in order to defend life and change the models that so threaten life and nature itself.

I would like to tell the Assembly first of all that, historically in Bolivia, the indigenous movement was able only to vote, but not to govern. In this short time, we have shown that the indigenous movement does not exist simply to vote in elections, but also to govern. Thanks to the struggle of social movements, politics is no longer a business or a reward. Politics now means service, commitment and, beyond that, sacrifice on behalf of our peoples.

Secondly, those who govern the world need to govern by obeying their people and by working in collaboration with their people and with social movements. Our people and nations cannot be governed by bankers, powerful businessmen or multinational corporations. Bolivia is the first and only country to have incorporated the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into its legislation. The Declaration was given legal status in the Plurinational State of Bolivia in 2007. Likewise, the rights of indigenous peoples were incorporated into our Constitution, which was approved by referendum in 2009.

Thirdly, the natural resources so generously bestowed upon us by our Mother Earth should benefit all. Bolivia's oil revenues in 2005, before I became President, totalled \$300 million. This year, following the nationalization of petrochemicals, oil revenues will exceed \$6 billion. Quite frankly and with all due sincerity, I would like to let Members know that neither I nor our Vice-President nor the Cabinet realized how quickly the economic situation of our country would change. By nationalizing hydrocarbons, we freed ourselves economically from the gendarmes of the world economy, by which I mean the World Bank and, especially, the International Monetary Fund. Before, our economic policy was decided by those international institutions, which follow a model whose primary aim is the exploitation of our natural resources.

Fourthly, another important theme is climate change, which has become one of the most serious problems for the planet and for humanity. The best way to combat climate change is through the policies, experience and traditions of the indigenous movement, which are based on solidarity, complementarity and, most important of all, a lifestyle in harmony with Mother Earth. For indigenous peoples, the paradigm

of living well means living well with oneself, with our communities and in harmony with nature.

Fifthly, indigenous peoples need to be the actors of change, in accord with their own models of development, with respect for the social, cultural, economic and judicial plurality of all peoples. We need to strengthen the links that unite us and to draw on our shared energy to build a culture of brotherhood, peace and life.

Sixthly, we need to tend and protect the world's agricultural lands and forests in order to promote the full productive potential of our territories, above all those that belong to indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples must likewise strengthen our capacity to feed all the nations of the world with our organic and ecological products.

Finally, it is imperative for the indigenous peoples of the world to achieve the full exercise of their individual and collective rights to their land and territories. We need to overcome our limitations with regard to development through access to education, health care, water, waste disposal and all basic services. Thanks to the economic improvement in my country and to the satellite systems we have installed, some of our brothers and sisters from isolated places — men and women who had never even seen the capital city of their province — are now better served and better connected, although not all of their demands have been fully met. It is difficult to meet everyone's demands in a short time frame, but change has begun to come to the various communities of Bolivia. Before, there was no telephone, no potable drinking water and no electricity. There was no television and no radio. Now, more than 80 per cent of our provinces and communities have potable water. Telecommunications reach more than 90 per cent. The major weakness remains the lack of irrigation systems. Meeting that need remains one of our responsibilities.

It is critical for all the world's Governments to further the process of overcoming and eradicating the conditions of extreme poverty and discrimination that still affect indigenous peoples, as well as to find solutions to the structural problems of poverty that many of those peoples still face. We have reduced the poverty rate from 38 per cent to 18 per cent, a historic record for Bolivia in terms of eradicating poverty.

Indigenous peoples have continuously resisted the processes of colonization in our countries and have always preserved the culture of life. We have learned

to live in harmony and equilibrium with Mother Earth, and we are humanity's moral reserve. This global conference should be the starting point for defining our collective action in defence of life and for launching a process of transformation and change based on the wisdom and science of our indigenous peoples, working directly in concert with the technology and scientific advances of our time.

Brothers and sisters, it is important, in the interest of our collective freedom, for me to share our small experience after taking on the responsibility of working for my country. We have to free ourselves politically in order to free ourselves economically. The Assembly knows perfectly well that throughout history there have been various empires that have sought to dominate us politically in order to steal from us for their own gain. Happily, political liberation through a democratic and cultural revolution has been crucial for our economic liberation and has enabled us to meet our people's demands. I am grateful to the United Nations and the General Assembly for the opportunity to participate in this international event for the world indigenous movement.

**The President:** I thank the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

**President Niinistö:** I am honoured to address the first United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. The participation of representatives of indigenous peoples in this Conference and in its preparations makes this event special for all of us. It reinforces our joint commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295).

In addition, this Conference marks an important step in fulfilling a key recommendation made in Alta, Norway, a year ago. Indigenous peoples should have the right to participate in matters concerning them at the United Nations. We look forward to the Secretary-General's proposals in that regard. In that context, we must express our concern over the reported attempts to prevent the representatives of indigenous peoples from Russia from joining us today.

Indigenous peoples' participation in decision-making is vital also at the national level. Procedures may vary

from country to country, but in all cases the objective should be to reach consensus in good faith. In Finland authorities are obliged by law to negotiate with the Sami Parliament, the representative body of the indigenous Sami people. Recently, the Finnish Government worked together with the Sami Parliament to expand the scope of the obligation to consult. The proposed reform spells out the concept of free, prior and informed consent.

Today, as we recall the words of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies", we are witnessing the important role being played in this Conference by young indigenous delegates. Indigenous youth must have the right, means and support to participate in their societies. To that end, access to education, information and the means of communication is essential. In Finland Sami youth have taken significant steps to improve their cultural and political participation through the establishment of the Sami Youth Council. Measures to revive indigenous languages, including "language-nest" activities for children, have proved to be an efficient way to strengthen the identity of young indigenous people.

Finland's role in the Arctic is defined by our geography, and our Arctic expertise by our emphasis on sustainable development and environmental considerations, and by international cooperation. It is essential to secure the welfare of people living in the Arctic. We are convinced that that contributes to economic stability and enhances competitiveness. Climate change has consequences for us all. We must address them together.

Industries such as fishing, herding, hunting and tourism are vital to Arctic business development and to the livelihoods of the peoples in the Arctic. Finland is very pleased with the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council, two weeks ago in Iqaluit, Canada. Arctic business leaders and indigenous peoples are working together to facilitate Arctic business-to-business activities and responsible economic development. Traditional knowledge, stewardship and a focus on small businesses will play a central role in that work, which Finland will continue to support going forward.

The Nordic countries have a long tradition of cooperating with the Sami and Greenlandic representative bodies. Cross-border cooperation is vital for finding common solutions to common

challenges. Internationally, we work together on issues such as biodiversity. Cooperation between different stakeholders is not without challenges. Only true dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders will yield solid results that are beneficial for all. For that reason, the voices of indigenous peoples must be heard also at the United Nations.

**The President:** I thank the President of the Republic of Finland for his statement.

I now give the floor to The Honourable Henri Djombo, Minister of the Forest Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Djombo** (Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

I would like, at the outset, to express the African Group's congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

The African Group is delighted to see that the meetings of this important World Conference dedicated to the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples are being led by Uganda, which, along with other African countries, has adopted a comprehensive and progressive approach to matters that concern indigenous peoples. We are also indebted to the President of the General Assembly at its previous session, His Excellency Mr. John Ashe. His persistence and leadership have ensured that this important meeting is taking place under the most favourable possible conditions.

We wish to emphasize that the process that led to this important meeting was a constructive and inclusive one and that it upheld the relevant provisions of resolution 66/296, of 17 September 2012, which called in particular for active participation in this Conference.

The African Group would like at this point to convey its deep appreciation for the important contribution of indigenous peoples to the preparatory process for this World Conference. Since indigenous peoples are both the subject of the Conference and key players in it, their active participation has contributed to draft resolution A/69/L.1, to be adopted today and which reflects their valuable contributions and recommendations. How could we not recognize, in the large numbers of us in the General Assembly Hall, the very affirmation of our shared faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity

and value of the human person and in the equality of the rights of men and women? Beyond those numbers, our common will to uphold the commitments contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is also illustrated here.

It is clear that the discussions we have had throughout the preparatory process for this conference, and even before, revealed the richness of sympathies surrounding indigenous issues. In Africa, the indigenous issue that brings us together today could be aptly discussed in the light of the continent's history, because the history of indigenous peoples varies from one region of the world to another and from one country to another. Today, the collective awareness has finally recognized the need to provide special protection to those communities, which have long been ostracized by discrimination.

For nearly a decade, African countries have embraced the cause of indigenous peoples and provided a new assurance of their commitment to that cause. We recall that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295), of 13 September 2007, was adopted with broad support from African countries. That was undoubtedly a victory for justice and human dignity, after more than two decades of negotiations between representatives of Governments and indigenous peoples. The African Group views its effective participation in this conference along the same lines.

Since then, the situation of indigenous peoples has gradually improved, and several African countries now acknowledge the existence of indigenous peoples in their territories as First Peoples groups, but ones who have historically been marginalized. Our Governments are working to ensure their social integration and to promote and protect their rights as full-fledged citizens, able to fully participate in the life of our nations with due respect for their culture and language. Protection and social integration are now a reality.

Following a consultative process that identified the factors, causes and effects of discrimination suffered by indigenous peoples of the Congo, the Congolese Government developed a domestic law standard that reflects the Government's desire to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That is the law for the promotion and protection of indigenous peoples of 25 February 2011. Now, three years after its adoption, the effects of that law, seen as

revolutionary and exemplary on the African continent, are noticeable.

In order to flesh out the law, in August 2013 the Congolese Government adopted a new national action plan to improve the quality of life of indigenous peoples. To ensure that they enjoy the dividends associated with the use of natural resources, the text provides for consultative and participatory approaches to take into account the free, prior and informed consent of the local indigenous populations with regard to the use of those resources. The standing provisions of that text guarantee the strict adherence to the sustainable exercise of rights and cultural activities by indigenous peoples.

As we know, the way of life and practices of indigenous peoples contribute to the care and maintenance of forest ecosystems and carbon sequestration. Therefore, my country calls on the international community and Governments to mobilize the necessary means to invest in the development of basic infrastructure near indigenous communities. That approach should include the promotion of income-generating activities and payment for environmental services.

Moreover, in order to give indigenous peoples a way to share their knowledge and their skills, the Republic of the Congo initiated and institutionalized the International Forum on Indigenous Peoples of Central Africa as a platform for integration and cooperation in the Congo Basin on indigenous issues. That institution, which is located in northern Congo in the Likouala department, has become an integral part of the operational bodies of the Economic Community of Central African States. As elsewhere in Africa, through the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples, the objective of my country remains the establishment of the rule of law, free from discrimination based on origin, ethnicity, way of life or culture.

The path of equality among the peoples is of course laborious and must be maintained by the strong will of our Governments. African countries are engaging in that effort and will continue to work with the United Nations system and all initiatives aimed at the development of those marginalized peoples. Africa will continue to participate in the efforts of the international community to combat any affront to human conscience and will spare no effort to contribute to the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. That is the commitment of our Governments.

**The President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia.

**President Ilves:** It is an honour to address this high-level meeting dedicated to the rights of indigenous peoples. As a member of an indigenous people — Estonians have lived on our present territory for several thousand years — I am especially happy to see among participants here so many of those whom the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples is about. Therefore, we can discuss issues faced by indigenous people together.

We have stood on both sides — as an oppressed indigenous people and now as a Member of the United Nations. We know what indigenous peoples face. I would like also to flag at the very outset that it is unfortunate that the participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations forums is constantly questioned. It is incomprehensible, if not to say bizarre and shameful, that some States attempt to hinder the participation of indigenous peoples and offer no explanation for their actions. We hope that this will soon be a thing of the past and that indigenous peoples will have a strong voice in the international community.

I recall that the indigenous peoples, those most directly affected by the provisions of the outcome document (draft resolution A/69/L.1) we are to adopt today, could not participate in the negotiations on it in the very last stages. However, I believe that their input in the earlier stages provided a good basis for the joint ownership of the document. I am pleased that in the outcome document that we are about to adopt, we can reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It includes clear deliverables to further improve indigenous peoples' rights, including stronger action by the United Nations. I hope that the outcome document will serve as a basis for the way ahead, and we are looking forward to its swift implementation.

The rights of indigenous peoples must be respected. The great majority of States do so, voicing their support for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Estonia has also voiced such respect. Unfortunately, however, in many countries, material gains are often prioritized over fundamental rights. It is crucial to understand that the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples is a form of wealth that clearly outweighs

the economic profit gained by the extensive and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

The reckless pursuit of profit at the expense of the cultures of peoples is precisely what we have witnessed in many Finno-Ugric areas. For Estonians, the future of Finno-Ugric peoples, with whom we are linked in kinship and language, is particularly close to our hearts. We know and have felt the fear of extinction. We have observed with concern that Finno-Ugric populations have decreased, while the sociopolitical activism needed to improve their position has not always corresponded to the major challenges in that area. The worst-case scenario, in our view, would be that national organizations vanish, their leaders be marginalized and the countries where they live become indifferent, claiming that, as such, indigenous peoples have no “perspective”, to use a phrase that we know from the Soviet era.

Urbanization, industrialization, world wars, deportations and extensive migration have all left deep wounds within many indigenous populations, including, for example, the Votic population, our Finno-Ugric cousins. A few years before the turn of the millennium, the construction of the large port of Laugasuu began. It is being built on traditional Votic lands, where our cousins have lived for as long as we Estonians have lived on ours. That construction poses a great danger to the last three remaining Votic villages: Luutsa, Liivtšülä and Jõgõperä.

The construction of the port of Laugasuu is in conflict with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but the current situation faced by the Votes is hardly unique. We all know that there is a long list of indigenous peoples living in the most challenging conditions. For example, side by side with the Votes lives another small Finno-Ugric nation, the Izhorians, who are especially threatened by the plan to erect a chemical plant right next to their villages of Rutsi and Viistina. If the chemical plant is erected and the environment devastated, the nation and the culture of the Votes will be endangered and may even be destroyed. Mankind will grow ever poorer.

To support our kindred nations, the Estonian Government launched the Kindred Peoples Programme in 1999. It is a Government aid programme to support the indigenous Uralic languages and cultures. It provides support in five different fields — education and training courses, research, culture and information exchange, health care and the protection of the

environment. For many years, Estonian experts have contributed to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Our Government has also provided financial support to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, and we shall continue to do so in the future.

I would like to acknowledge New Zealand for always including the Maori peoples in their delegation and meetings. I would like to thank Finland, Norway and Sweden for ensuring the presence of a representative Saami delegation at all United Nations meetings on indigenous peoples and for voicing their sincere concern about the future of indigenous peoples. I would like to associate myself with the statement made earlier by the President of Finland with regard to the inability of the Kola Saami to attend this meeting.

I would like to thank Ukraine for supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295) and for recognizing the Crimean Tatars as an indigenous people. I would like to thank the many other countries that are taking steps to improve the situation of indigenous peoples. We are obliged to do everything that we can to support indigenous peoples, to respect their past and to grant them a future. All indigenous peoples must be acknowledged, no matter where they live, be it in the Leningrad oblast, Crimea, Amazonas State, New Zealand, Arizona or the Scandinavian peninsula. Let us learn to listen to the voices that have been silenced for too long and that too often continue to be so. We cannot allow the persistence of a colonialist mentality to cover up crimes committed against indigenous peoples, nor can we continue to deny indigenous peoples the right to have a say over their own futures.

In conclusion, the former Estonian President, the beloved writer and film-maker Lennart Meri, was one of those individuals who dared to listen to and to film such peoples. I would like to invite members to the opening of an exhibition of photographs from his film and his journeys to the Finno-Ugric indigenous nations in the Conference Building today at 6 p.m. It is a fitting tribute to a great film-maker and a man who devoted his life to showing how indigenous peoples live and how they have suffered.

**The President:** I thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Mexican States.

**President Peña Nieto** (*spoke in Spanish*): As President of Mexico and as the representative of a multicultural nation, originally founded on the basis of its indigenous peoples, it is a great honour for me to participate in this World Conference. I come to this plenary meeting to affirm the ongoing commitment of Mexico to the protection and recognition of the rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples in all regions and countries of the world. I express my highest appreciation to the General Assembly for its decision in 2010 to hold this historic event, which is the first high-level meeting dedicated exclusively to the well-being of indigenous peoples.

For Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean, the indigenous issue is at the root of our identities and our historical, social and political circumstances. I mention that because of the linguistic diversity and the high number of indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, who account for nearly 45 million people. However, I say it, above all, because of the commitment and leadership that indigenous women and men have shown over the years to the recognition, protection and promotion of their rights.

For Mexico, it has been a great honour to contribute to the preparation of this World Conference and the negotiation of its outcome document (A/69/L.1). The major objective is to achieve the effective exercise of the rights of indigenous peoples in all nations. That is a very significant achievement and the result of an open, inclusive and constructive dialogue between Member States and indigenous representatives. We have also taken care to ensure that their recommendations are in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Mexico trusts that the final document will be a road map enabling us to reposition indigenous issues on the international agenda and to give renewed impetus to the actions of the United Nations in that area.

The Mexican delegation appreciates the incorporation of several of the approaches it presented in favour of the indigenous of the world, including the following: the post-2015 development agenda should ensure the rights of indigenous peoples; the participation of first peoples in the work of the United Nations should have a status distinct from that of non-governmental organizations; national laws should be harmonized in the spirit of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the Human Rights Council, in consultation with indigenous peoples, should monitor, evaluate and

improve the implementation of the Declaration in each Member State. Mexico would like to see those ideas translated into concrete benefits for the estimated 5,000 indigenous peoples in the world.

We have to continue working together. Inequality, injustice and discrimination against indigenous peoples are still, unfortunately, a grim reality. To eradicate those practices and enable indigenous peoples to assert their rights, we need to strengthen international cooperation and, above all, intensify actions within each country. In Mexico, our Constitution recognizes and guarantees the right of indigenous peoples and communities to self-determination and thus to the autonomy to decide their internal forms of coexistence and social, economic, political and cultural organization. It also recognizes their right to preserve and promote their culture, traditions and customs in an environment of equality and non-discrimination.

For the more than 15 million indigenous people of Mexico to fully exercise those rights, the State relies on a cross-cutting policy, aimed at improving their quality of life and the creation of greater opportunities for development. That policy includes specific actions to eradicate hunger and overcome extreme poverty in indigenous municipalities as well as the construction of basic infrastructure in their communities. Furthermore, the main programme to fight poverty, which serves more than 6 million persons of indigenous origin, has been redesigned and strengthened. We are also determined to support their integration in public education, health-care services and adequate housing. We also encourage their access to justice and their efforts to increase production and marketing of their products and crafts, with a focus on sustainability.

In short, the Government of Mexico supports indigenous peoples so that they can achieve real, inclusive development and improve their income and quality of life, without losing their cultural identity or compromising the natural heritage of the country. In that regard, in accordance with international commitments, we have established a respectful and direct dialogue with various indigenous communities in order to guide public policy and infrastructure projects in their areas of influence. We are thus ensuring effective participation in the design of actions that promote their comprehensive development, with full respect for their self-determination.

The development initiatives of the United Nations deserve the combined skills and experiences of all

countries, because only together can we realize the goal of building a better future for all humankind. It is with abiding conviction that Mexicans continue to act with global responsibility within this international Organization, since it is the forum that best represents the diversity of nations and the shared aspiration to peace, development and prosperity for all the peoples of the world.

In Mexico, we are determined to build a true society of rights, in which all people, regardless of their ethnic origin, can exercise in their daily lives the rights and freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution and international treaties.

**The President:** I thank the President of the United Mexican States for his statement.

Pursuant to sub-paragraph 3 (b) of resolution 66/296, we will now hear statements by three representatives of indigenous peoples.

I now give the floor to Chief Oren Lyons, Chief of the Onondaga Nation Council of Chiefs.

**Chief Oren Lyons:** As we say in Onondagan, “Thank you for being well”. And your answer, Mr. President, is “Yes, what you say is true.” The responsibility for speaking on behalf of indigenous people has been given me again. I shall do the best that I can on their behalf.

I am so glad to see all the people here. It has been a long journey. I greet the Assembly with peace and friendship, and a question. How do you instruct 7 billion people as to their relationship with the Earth? Until they learn that relationship, we are imperilled as a species. That relationship is fundamental to our existence, and we have to understand that Nature is the authority and the final word. We are subject to every natural force in this world — water, for example, which is the first law of life.

We now have 7 billion people, soon to be 8 billion, soon to be 9 billion, and soon to be 10 billion. Our children are going to suffer the consequences of decisions that are made here today. The responsibility to future generations has been given to us; it was told to us many hundreds of years ago. We were set — we were advised — by the Great Peacemaker, when He said,

“In your Council for the welfare of the people, think not of yourself nor your family nor even your generation. Make your decisions on behalf of seven generations hence”.

Those layers and layers of humankind awaiting their turn on Earth will be determined; their fate will be determined by we who sit here today. I think that the current generation is the generation that is going to make the decision as to whether or not we survive as a species.

Today I bring participants greetings from indigenous people around the world. Let me repeat: we are the keepers of traditions, ceremonies, histories and the future of nations, and we are the ones who escaped your proselytization. We survived with the wisdom of the old ones. We are pleased to add our voices to others in the Assembly in this great effort for common sense and peace among nations.

I bring a most urgent message that was brought to our annual gathering of the Traditional Circle of Elders and Youth. This message was brought by a runner from the North, a traditional person from Greenland. He said: “The ice is melting”. He informed us that years ago they had noticed trickles of water coming down the sheer face of Glacier Mountain, and that trickle has grown to a roaring river of ice water pouring out of the mountain into the Atlantic Ocean. Thousands of feet of ice have been lost, and it continues to melt at an accelerating pace. I remind the Assembly that the acceleration is what we are dealing with. The compounding effect is that we are now fully engaged.

In the Assembly, as leaders of the world, as a collective voice, we join this mission of peace. We add our presence in support of this great effort for reconciliation between peoples and nations. We agree that there must be parity and equity between rich and poor nations, between white people and people of colour, and rich people and poor people, with special attention to women, children and indigenous peoples. We, in our collective voices, add that there must be a reconciliation between peoples and the natural world, between nation States and the forests that sustain us, between corporations and the resources that they mine, the fish that they catch and the water that they use.

Indigenous nations and peoples believe in the spiritual powers of the universe. We believe in the ultimate power and authority and limitless energy beyond our comprehension. We believe in the order of the universe. We believe in the laws of creation and that all life is bound by these natural laws. We call this essence the spirit of life. This is what gives the world the energy to create and procreate and becomes the

ponderous and powerful law of regeneration — the law of the seed.

We, in our collective voices, speak to this to remind everyone that spirit and spiritual laws transcend generations. We know, because this has sustained us. Religion and spirituality are vital to survival and moral law. It is a faith that has sustained our human spirit through our darkest hours. It has sustained our human spirit in times of crisis during the times we suffered through the grinding measures of inexorable persecutions that have spanned generations and continue today. Yet here we are today, adding our voices to this plea for sanity in leadership and responsibility to the future generations whose faces are looking up from the Earth, each awaiting their time of life here.

The collective voices of indigenous people add that we are saddened by the absence of many of our brothers, not allowed to be in the Assembly today. However, we believe that reconciliation should begin at the United Nations because peace is an inclusive term. We include everyone, and peace and reconciliation is the purpose of this summit. Peace is dynamic and requires great effort of spirit and mind to attain unity. Leaders of peace must step forward and take responsibility for a paradigm change in the direction of current lifestyles and materialistic societies. The human species has become the most voracious and abusive consumer of Earth's resources. We have tipped the balance against our children and their future and we imperil all life.

Despite all of our declarations and all of our proclamations, no matter how profound they may be, the ice is melting in the North. We see the accelerations of the winds. We see the fires that are raging around the world, insects moving northward, the Lyme tick. We are dealing with all this. And we see that the sun's rays that provide us with light, energy and the very essence of life are now causing sickness among our people, blinding animals and killing the plankton of the sea. This is only the beginning and we are helpless already. We will now see the real power, the spiritual power of the Earth.

There can be no peace as long as we wage war upon our mother, the Earth. Responsible and courageous actions must be taken to realign ourselves with the great laws of nature. We must meet this crisis now, while we still have time. We offer these words as common peoples in support of peace, equity, justice and reconciliation. As we speak, the ice continues to melt in the North.

There is an addendum to this. I gave this speech 14 years ago in this very Hall. So, what have we learned? This effort for me to speak on behalf of the indigenous people, I thought, well, what will I write now? I said, I do not need to write. I just need to repeat what we said to the Assembly 14 years ago — precious years that we have lost. So I urge the Assembly, I urge Member States, to listen to our voice. We are the pulse of Mother Earth. We have experience and we have a lot of knowledge, so keep our languages. The United Nations might have to call on us again.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Ms. Aili Keshkitalo, President of the Sami Parliament of Norway.

**Ms. Keshkitalo:** It is indeed a great honour for me, as the President of the Sami Parliament of Norway, to address the General Assembly on this historic occasion today, the opening of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. It has been a long journey for all of us: from December 2010, when the General Assembly decided that the World Conference should be held, until today's actual opening of the World Conference. The arduous journey within the United Nations to promote and advance indigenous peoples' rights has been an inspirational one, and yet one that is grounded in pragmatism.

I sincerely thank all concerned who were involved in the process, particularly indigenous peoples in the seven indigenous regions, including the Indigenous Global Coordinating Group and Member States, for their tireless efforts, their wisdom and their collaborative spirit. We have had challenges in the process, including with regard to indigenous peoples' participation, due to reasons related to the rules of procedure and other matters.

Today, my thoughts also go to those indigenous representatives who played an instrumental role in the process but have since passed away. They were our siblings, our teachers, our parents and our friends. Their contributions lie deep in our hearts, and we pay respect to their memories. I am sure that their spirits are with us during these momentous days.

Indigenous peoples have been marginalized, discriminated against and ignored; but we have not lost heart, struggling for many decades until September 2007, when the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was finally adopted by this apex world body. It was a historic milestone and a triumph for justice and human dignity. The

challenge now remains to implement the provisions of the Declaration by closing the gap between theory and practice, between inspiration and reality, between commitment and implementation and between politics and good faith and sincerity.

Every single indigenous regional and thematic caucus has contributed to that process, drawing upon their respective struggles to halt the ongoing usurpation of our lands, territories and resources; eliminate discriminatory practices sometimes aimed at destroying our cultures; craft solutions to halt climate change in order to prevent the imposition of development models that destroy the life-giving capacities and integrity of Mother Earth; and maintain our identities, cultures and dignity and our social and political integrity.

One gathering in a small city in the traditional Sami territory within Norway became the epicentre of the indigenous peoples preparatory process — the Global Indigenous Preparatory Meeting, held in Alta in June 2013. It was a gathering attended by approximately 600 indigenous representatives from around the world, as well as some Governments — a gathering that my Parliament was honoured to host. The Alta conference was momentous. It was the culmination, the end result, of a process that started at local and national levels, then went regional and finally global. Indigenous peoples from around the world mobilized resources and support and unanimously agreed on their common priorities.

The city of Alta is significant. It is where many of the leaders of the Sami Kautokeino Rebellion of 1852 were sentenced to death and executed. It is also the birthplace of Norway's modern indigenous policy. The dispute about the hydroelectric development of the Alta-Kautokeino watercourse in the 1980s highlighted the need to clarify the State's relationship to Sami people, including our legal position. That was the start of a process that led to the State's recognition of the Sami as an indigenous people and the establishment of the Sami Parliament.

Indigenous peoples have been fighting for a very long time to be recognized as "peoples" under international law. As we know, article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295) mirrors common article 1 of the two international human rights covenants of 1966. The right to self-determination is a fundamental right of all peoples, which includes the right of peoples to decide for themselves how they wish to engage with

other peoples and with the international community. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes that indigenous peoples are free and equal to all other peoples and that they have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination. We are not there yet, but we are slowly moving in the right direction.

I welcome the fact that the outcome document of the World Conference recognizes the urgent need to ensure that indigenous peoples' representatives and their representative institutions are able to participate at the United Nations on issues affecting them. Indigenous peoples are ready to engage in discussions about how that can be achieved, and we look forward to studying the Secretary-General's report on this matter during the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

I believe that the process leading up to the World Conference has demonstrated that indigenous peoples make important contributions to the work of the United Nations. We are reliable partners that engage in the work of the United Nations, and we do so in good faith and expect the same in return from States and the United Nations. Make no mistake; indigenous peoples are here to help strengthen societies, by advancing our collective rights and the rights of our elders, women, youth, children and disabled. When humankind harnesses the potential of indigenous peoples, we will all be more harmonious, more successful and more just.

If there is anything all of us in this great Hall should learn from the past three years, it is that the relationship among indigenous peoples, Member States and the United Nations can be mutually respectful and beneficial when carried out in good faith and in the spirit of cooperation. Indigenous peoples have suffered — and still do — from historic injustice as the result of discrimination, colonization, invalid legal doctrines and dispossession of our lands, territories and resources, all of which has prevented us from fully exercising our rights, including our right to development in accordance with our own needs and aspirations. That is why we work so hard to advocate for our rights.

A Sami proverb says that "The night is not so long that the day never comes", which essentially means that all bad things will eventually come to an end. The adoption of the outcome document of the World Conference is a small but important step towards the dawn of the day of indigenous peoples. What we have not achieved in this process, we will pursue in the

future, at the national and international levels, with great determination in the spirit of cooperation.

We are committed to continuing to build a just and sustainable future for our coming generations. We shall advocate for what matters in the lives of our peoples, including by increasing our efforts to start a new chapter of international cooperation that recognizes and advances our rights, while fully respecting the rights of others. This is the time when we — States, indigenous peoples and other sectors of society — have no other, wiser choice but to continue to work together. This is the time when we must persist in realizing our common aspirations for human rights, justice, dignity, integrity, cultural identity and a better future for the entire world community.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mr. Luis Evelis, Member of the Senate of Colombia.

**Mr. Evelis (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*):** I wish to convey a very fraternal greeting to the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, Heads of State and Government, the various delegations and the indigenous peoples and their representatives at this Conference.

I also welcome the efforts of the United Nations to ensure a participatory process for all the peoples and bodies that were invited to build a document that would establish a plan of action designed to ensure the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295). I also wish to highlight the work done by the Global Coordinating Group, particularly the important role played in that process by Ms. Mirna Cunningham and Mr. Les Malezer.

I thank the members of the Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations for giving me the honour of participating in this Conference. I would also point out that the outcome document of this summit (resolution 69/2) is the result of an ongoing struggle of organizations and indigenous peoples and of their considerable ability to debate and come together. I therefore urge that we pursue this dialogue not only at the national level, but also at the international level and in the United Nations framework.

I recognize the progress made by and the willingness of certain States and Governments to incorporate into their national legislation all international instruments, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights

of Indigenous Peoples. I also urge that all agreements reached and the outcome document be incorporated into and implemented through public programmes and policies and explicit budgets to ensure that the indigenous peoples of Latin America and the world can enjoy their rights.

I would also like to state that while it may be true that there has been important progress made in the United Nations, it is necessary to make the aspirations of indigenous peoples much more concrete and to adopt their paradigms for coexistence, peace, development and well-being. It must also be said that there are great lacunae that are cause for much concern. As certain United Nations agencies and other international organizations have noted, indigenous peoples continue to be the poorest of the poor, despite so much legislation and some very advanced constitutions in certain parts of the world.

Indigenous peoples suffer the greatest effects of climate change. They are also victims of and suffer from all the consequences of a development model that leads to illiteracy, poverty and hunger. In many parts of the world, above all in our region, indigenous peoples have the most limited access to quality health care and education. In some countries, indigenous peoples are threatened with physical and cultural extermination. We have also seen some States implement reforms to lower international standards with respect to indigenous rights, particularly regarding prior notice, self-determination and free, prior and informed consent.

We note that some sectors within indigenous groups are more vulnerable, including women, young people and children. We are also seeing an increased exodus of indigenous peoples to major cities, owing to a lack of opportunity in many countries. Against that background and recognizing the feelings of the Indian populations in some countries of the world, I want to suggest the following recommendations on behalf of the indigenous peoples of Latin America.

States should, after the outcome document contained in draft resolution A/69/L.1 has been adopted and on the basis of the Declaration and the international instruments on the subject, proceed to incorporate all the relevant instruments and adopt them in their national legislatures. That should lead to public policy initiatives that are inclusive as well as capable of distinguishing and attempting to resolve the gaps

that have been referred to by speakers and in the very valuable outcome document that we will approve today.

*Mrs. Perceval (Argentina), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

In addition, States in the United Nations system and the international community must listen to indigenous peoples and pay attention to their paradigms for development, because those peoples are well rooted in their relationship with Mother Earth and know that nature itself has rights. If we do not understand that, I would be pessimistic as to the future well-being not just of indigenous peoples, but also of all of humanity. We also recommend that we design different policies to deal with all of the difficulties of exclusion that the women, young people and children of indigenous communities suffer in all parts of the world. We need to make progress in terms of self-determination; free, prior and informed consent is necessary for any proposed action. It is important that we not just look for economic growth indicators in those States, but that growth also be reflected in living well, as the major indicator of overcoming poverty and of the well-being of indigenous peoples.

I would also like to recommend that the United Nations system continue to play an important role in building consensus when it comes to defining strategies, bringing together the international community, the private sector and multilateral sectors to address all situations of exclusion suffered by indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples within their organizations must themselves be encouraged to continue to fight and work to put forward proposals, because the future of humanity is not just the future of the powerful and of Governments; it is also a future that is in our hands. Together we have to save the planet. We all have the opportunity to achieve that; there is room for everyone.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with paragraph 3 (b) of resolution 66/296, I now give the floor to Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**Mr. Al Hussein:** It is a great honour for me to join the General Assembly today at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. I see this as both a celebration and a call for action. We are here to celebrate the contributions that indigenous peoples make to our societies, as well as the progress that we have achieved towards the full recognition and respect for their rights, including through the implementation of the United

Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295). But we are also here so that States can commit to stronger action to close the gaps in implementation, gaps that continue to diminish the impact of the Declaration and other human rights standards and so that we can take action to strengthen our fight against the discrimination, exclusion and land grabs that indigenous peoples still experience in all regions of the world. That action must demonstrate that our resolve to advance the rights of indigenous peoples is not simply rhetorical, but real.

A proverb of the Native American Hopi tribe states, "One finger cannot lift a pebble". It reminds us that alone, we can achieve very little — perhaps hardly anything of significance. So I am heartened by the strong and high-level engagement of numerous States and other parties in the preparations for this Conference and, in particular, by the very impressive commitment on the part of so many indigenous peoples. Their in-depth contributions, especially to the outcome document (A/67/994, annex) of the Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference in Alta, have been crucial. I very much hope that in the future the United Nations will open its doors even wider to accommodate the full participation of indigenous peoples.

Many representatives in the Hall today have travelled from remote corners of the world. Some of the beneficiaries of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples have travelled for up to seven days, taking several boats and flights to attend this event, in order to highlight the challenges their communities face, for many challenges remain. Seven years after the adoption of the Declaration, specific disaggregated data on indigenous peoples are lacking. But the harsh imprint of poverty and marginalization suffered by indigenous peoples is clearly visible in all the available statistics.

In developed countries, the percentage of indigenous people in prison is highly disproportionate to their numbers. In one country, indigenous children were 25 times more likely to be in detention than other children. In Latin America and the Caribbean, indigenous children are three times more likely than others to have no access to education, safe drinking water or housing. In Africa and Asia, indigenous young adults are more likely to be deprived of their right to education, especially if they are female. In the Arctic, the Pacific and South-East Asia, indigenous women are at greater risk of dying during pregnancy

or childbirth than women from other communities, and their newborns and young children are also more likely to die. Such stark statistics translate into thousands of human tragedies — thousands of violations of human rights.

This World Conference and its outcome document constitute the stepping stones that will bring our work on indigenous peoples' rights to a new level. And as we do so, we must also recall the past. Recently, I learned about a story that I found very moving. For centuries, an enormous rock that resembled a large, pale bison stood by the South Saskatchewan River in Canada. It was a sacred gathering place for indigenous peoples on the vast plains. But in 1966, in order to accommodate the construction of a dam and an artificial lake, that monumental rock was blown apart with dynamite. The waters rose and the jagged, broken pieces were covered in darkness. But last month, after a patient search, those pieces were found, deep under the waters. Once again, as their ancestors had done for generations, indigenous peoples could touch the remains of the rock and feel through it their connection to their past.

The rock could not be reconstituted; its pieces will remain under water. But the discovery will bring the rock's story to life. Generations to come will know where it is and what it has meant and continues to mean to their community. Through this story, I understand that what has been done is done. Often it has been bitterly unjust. But the indigenous peoples of the world have shown us their strength, persistence and depth of wisdom. They possess clarity and knowledge. Standing here together we can look forward and build societies based on partnership, mutual respect and human rights.

At this World Conference, I urge Member States to once again pledge to ensure that the human rights and dignity of all indigenous peoples are acknowledged and fully protected, in line with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I am confident that the draft outcome document of this Conference will be adopted and will provide strong human rights tools to promote the full application of the Declaration.

The constant and vigorous engagement of human rights mechanisms is vitally important. We must also make sure that indigenous peoples' rights are fully embedded in all other international initiatives that affect them. The new post-2015 sustainable development goals must be explicitly rooted in those rights, so that indigenous rights, lands and cultures can no longer be sacrificed in the name of skewed concepts

of development. Indigenous peoples' concerns and recommendations will also be vital for tomorrow's Climate Summit and for the 2015 World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. Natural disasters and the effects of climate change are often borne by indigenous peoples — and those peoples may also hold the traditional knowledge that can help mitigate these disasters.

But, ultimately, the meaning and value of all the international processes can be measured only in terms of their real impact. The commitments that we make here and at other conferences must be followed up decisively at the national and local levels with resources and political will that match the ambitions expressed in speeches. It is easy to be brave from a distance, as the proverb says. We need real impact.

I look forward to seeing national action plans and strategies in line with the objectives of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, plans and strategies that include all of the Declaration's principles: self-determination; free, prior and informed consent; the rights of indigenous women; respect for treaty rights; the rights of indigenous persons with disabilities; and many more.

I call on States to develop such plans in full cooperation with indigenous peoples. There must be an immediate halt to the intimidation, persecution, violence and sometimes death that advocates for indigenous peoples continue to face in some countries when they take up the legitimate defence of their communities' rights and lands. All those who seek to cooperate with the United Nations in the field of human rights must be free to do so. I am also very concerned about reports that some indigenous representatives have been prevented from taking part in this conference. My Office, including its field presences, stands ready, together with our United Nations partners, to support the efforts of the international community and indigenous peoples, building on the work that we are already undertaking in close cooperation with Governments and indigenous peoples in all regions.

This World Conference has the potential to be a milestone in our quest to ensure full respect for the rights of indigenous peoples. I encourage all present to set out clear goals and renewed commitment, so that that quest can move forward.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with paragraph 3 (b) of resolution 66/296, I

now give the floor to Ms. Dalee Sambo Dorough, Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

**Ms. Dorough** (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues): First, I want to acknowledge the Onondaga Nation, original inhabitants of this land, and thank them for the welcome on their territory once again. I would also like to echo the comments of concern made by the Presidents of Finland and Estonia and, just now, by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, concerning any and all actions to disallow indigenous peoples' participation in this gathering today. Hopefully, such actions will not continue in the future.

On behalf of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, I, too, want to welcome each of the participants to the United Nations and this significant two-day high-level plenary meeting — a meeting that should be considered important for all indigenous peoples across the globe. Since the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 66/296 and the initial discussions by the Government of Bolivia, the Forum has concerned itself with the full, effective and equal participation of indigenous peoples in the preparatory processes for this event. Many will agree that the preparations for this gathering had a very slow start, causing indigenous peoples, including those who serve voluntarily as expert members of the Forum, to become deeply concerned at the uncertainty that was generated by lack of concrete United Nations action.

However, since 2011, the Forum's expert members have generously provided space in the Forum's agenda in order to build a spirit of partnership, inclusiveness and respect between Member States, indigenous peoples and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. I believe that without the generosity of the Forum this process would not have taken the form or momentum that has collectively propelled us to this opening ceremony and our substantive programme for the afternoon and tomorrow. I genuinely hope this spirit of partnership continues at the regional and national levels, and, more importantly, at the indigenous community level.

Indigenous peoples have spent the past few decades building genuine cooperation with States in good faith, consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a strong testament to what can be achieved when States and indigenous peoples strive together

to uphold the Charter's purposes and principles and thereby strengthen the international human rights system as a whole.

At this moment, it is highly important for all of us not just to underscore the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, but also to be mindful of the pertinent international legal obligations of Member States in relation to all peoples, including indigenous peoples. Specifically, I would like to emphasize the peremptory norms of international law and in particular the principle of and right to self-determination, as affirmed in the Charter, the International Covenants, the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (resolution 2625 (XXV)) and, of course, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295, annex).

Furthermore, I must stress that even though the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as a whole, is not an expression of customary international law,

“some of its key provisions can reasonably be regarded as corresponding to established principles of general international law, therefore implying the existence of equivalent and parallel international obligations to [sic] which States are *bound* to comply with ...

“The relevant areas of indigenous peoples' rights with respect to which the discourse on customary international law arises are self-determination, [the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples] autonomy or self-government, cultural rights and identity, land rights as well as reparation, redress and remedies.”

In addition to the objectives of the hastily negotiated outcome document, contained in draft resolution A/69/L.1, with the limited and carefully controlled participation of indigenous peoples from around the globe, the peremptory norms of international law and customary international law principles remain essential and constant parameters for all future dialogue, negotiation and implementation of the individual and collective human rights of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the articulation of the right to free, prior and informed consent, and the continuing importance of indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories and resources, remain urgent and necessary features for

the survival, sustainability and vitality of indigenous peoples, nations and communities.

For all future dialogue, at the local, national and especially international level, we must recognize that consensus loses its validity if it is used to undermine the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, equality and non-discrimination, as well as good faith. Good governance becomes a casualty if a few States, or even one State, can undermine such essential rights and principles at the international level. We must recognize that indigenous peoples are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the world. It is therefore a huge injustice if they are severely undermined by a highly questionable practice that allows the lowest common denominator to prevail.

In 1993, former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali underlined that “human rights constitute the common language of humanity”. The human rights of indigenous peoples must not be politicized or otherwise undermined by local, regional and national State interests and agendas. They must rather be respected and recognized by local, regional and national Governments. These principles and human rights are universal. They do not stop at the borders between so-called developed and developing States. All States must consult and cooperate with indigenous peoples, consistent with their right to free, prior and informed consent, as well as related State international obligations, including those pertaining to human rights, the environment and sustainable and equitable development. This high-level plenary meeting should be remembered for its contribution through a principled outcome document — a document that must be interpreted against the backdrop of international law, customary international law principles and in particular the human rights affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In conclusion, I call on Member States, guided by a spirit of solidarity and partnership with indigenous peoples and consistent with their international legal obligations, as well as their political capacity, to provide support for effective implementation of the outcome document and its mutually agreed terms for cooperation within the framework of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Finally, let us ensure that we are guided not only by legal imperatives and international legal obligations but also by moral imperatives.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the opening session of the high-level meeting. I should now like to consult members with a view to giving the floor to the indigenous leader and Nobel laureate Ms. Rigoberta Menchú. If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, and without setting a precedent, to invite Ms. Menchú to make a statement at this meeting?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Menchú.

**Ms. Menchú** (*spoke in Spanish*): Today is a sacred day in the Mayan calendar, celebrating the seven energies of Ahau Ahpu. Ahpu is the strength of the human being, of every man and woman living on our planet. Ahpu reminds us that we are also children of oxygen and Mother Earth, and with that observation I begin my contribution to the General Assembly at its first high-level meeting on indigenous peoples. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for enabling the Assembly to host this meeting, and I hope it will culminate in the adoption of a draft resolution (A/69/L.1) that promotes the rights and dignity of indigenous peoples.

First, it was in 1923 that our brother Deskaheh travelled to the League of Nations to ask to be able to participate fully and actively within the organization. He did not succeed, but he set a precedent.

Many years ago, when I was 23, I had the good fortune to participate in the inaugural meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, at which indigenous peoples began a strong petition within the United Nations. We are grateful to that Working Group, to which we pay tribute today, for having moved forward the debate on the rights of indigenous peoples. Since 1982, when the Working Group began its work, the United Nations has seen hundreds of thousands of delegations of men and women. As a result, we saw the establishment of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which led to the adoption of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), by the International Labour Organization. That gave rise to the participation of indigenous peoples at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, where a programme of action that provided for the establishment of the first International Decade of Indigenous Peoples. I recall all the aforementioned events because we, as indigenous peoples, remember

everything that we have been through, and the history of the world is reflected in our intensive efforts and the many United Nations resolutions.

Today, we are once again witnessing extraordinary progress, not only in the rights of indigenous peoples but also in the common language to define those rights. That is why we fully support the adoption of the draft resolution at this World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (A/69/L.1), which will once again strengthen not only our struggles but also, above all, the action plans for, on the one hand, indigenous peoples and, on the other, for nations or nation States. We would like to say that the progress made with regard to indigenous peoples has made it possible for many millions of indigenous peoples to reaffirm their identity, their rights and their existence.

Today, however, I speak on behalf of the young people, the children and those thousands of millions of our brothers who still suffer from hunger, poverty and malnutrition and the effects of the daily violence that they experience in their communities, villages and lands in order to protect their seas, rivers, waters and land. I am here because I believe that indigenous peoples and their young people and children have the right to a future. That is why we need once again to agree on the outcome document that we hope the General Assembly will adopt in a few minutes.

For us, peace means freedom, mutual respect, common interest and consultation. For us, peace is listening to the various views, because we are part of one diversity. As has already been noted, it is a great responsibility to speak on behalf of the indigenous peoples today. That is why I also appeal to all indigenous peoples and their leaders to ensure that they act with full responsibility and that, above all, we set as a priority the fundamental interests of our communities and our peoples.

We therefore have gathered today to celebrate such progress. We can see the future. We have success stories. That is why there is the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which has also been discussed for several decades. I would like to pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of indigenous men and women who have lost their lives since the debate on their rights began in the United Nations in August 1982. Since that time, indigenous communities have suffered the most serious human rights violations, including genocide, ethnic crimes, fratricide and gender-based crimes. Those concepts are still not included in the

draft resolution. However, we must set a precedent so that in the Assembly we can strengthen the observance and monitoring of international mechanisms, above all, those that, together with members and the peoples of the world, we have established and adopted.

Uncertainty still prevails among our peoples in the area of health, because health is essential for all humankind. However, for indigenous peoples in particular, health means their overall well-being and does not relate only to pain and suffering in one part of the body. We must include the existing technologies of indigenous peoples in comprehensive development plans. It is essential to incorporate the science and knowledge of indigenous peoples in the area of education. Today, we need to adopt a new approach to education in a multicultural context, not merely an education that reproduces the paradigms of colonialism or subjugation. We need to combat racism and discrimination head on, because racism and discrimination are emotional habits and mental ills that undermine the integrity of the human being. We must also strengthen our legitimate, full, active and focused participation in programmes of work that are relevant to us, both within the bodies of the United Nations and in public policies at the national level.

We congratulate our brothers and sisters who first courageously came to speak to the international community. They denounced crimes against humanity. They made it clear that humankind breathes the oxygen of our Mother Earth. Without them, our overall well-being would have been completely undermined.

During the 34 years that I have had the good fortune to be connected with the United Nations, I have seen not only developments but also frustration, since the greatest problems can be found among the millions of indigenous people living in mountainous areas and in communities that are still not connected by roads. They still have access only to a small amount of information, not the technology that humankind talks about today.

We peoples, like all peoples who have suffered from slavery and subjection, are like all men and women who have suffered violence against their own flesh. Nevertheless, they have the strength to shine a light and share it with others. If indigenous peoples are able to achieve their freedom and, above all, their self-determination, then all international norms will lead to dignified policies at the national level. It is not possible to understand indigenous rights if you do not see them as being part of the daily life of our populations. That

is why this is a new opportunity for us to open common space for reciprocity, mutual respect, the fullness of life and the future of all of humankind.

I see a lot of young faces here. These young people greatly inspire us. They come from the various nations of the world, and they include many young leaders. I pay tribute to Mexico, which has gone to great lengths to promote the draft resolution that we are going to adopt, but I would also pay tribute to our brother Evo Morales, who leads the Plurinational State of Bolivia and very many other fights that, in years past, when we were younger, seemed to be impossible to fight. I also pay tribute to the young people in the various diplomatic missions here at the United Nations. When I walked through the United Nations corridors with a police escort, a lot of those present here were a lot younger than they are now.

I am a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. I was the first Ambassador of the first International Year of Indigenous Peoples in 1993, I was appointed by the Secretary-General at the time, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and he gave me the opportunity to visit the 29 nations of the world where indigenous people live. Today I see them represented here, and I am very proud of that fact, because I can see that the way is open. We have to build it together. Peace is life. Peace is education and peace is culture.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/69/L.1. I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Gettu** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/69/L.1, entitled "Outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples", I wish to put on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Under the terms of paragraphs 31 and 40 of draft resolutions A/69/L.1, the General Assembly would, first, request the Secretary-General, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues and Member States, to begin the development, within existing resources, of a system-wide action plan to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the

Declaration and to report to the General Assembly at its seventieth session, through the Economic and Social Council, on progress made.

Secondly, it would request the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Support Group and Member States, and taking into account the views expressed by the indigenous people, to report to the General Assembly at its seventieth session on the implementation of the draft resolution and present options to the General Assembly at its seventieth session, through the Economic and Social Council, including recommendations regarding, first, using modified and improved existing United Nations mechanisms to achieve the aims of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People; secondly, ways to enhance a coherent, system-wide approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and thirdly, concrete proposals to enable the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions, building on the Secretary-General's report on ways and means of promoting participation in the United Nations of indigenous peoples' representatives on the issues affecting them (A/HRC/21/24).

The requested activities referred to in the draft resolution related to paragraph 1 of the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2014-2015 (A/67/6/Rev.1) and section 2 of the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, "General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management".

Pursuant to paragraphs 31 and 40 of the draft resolution, the request for documentation would constitute an addition to the documentation workloads of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of two pre-session documents of 8,500 words each in all six languages. This would entail additional requirements in the amount of \$100,800 for documentation service in 2015. As additional conference-servicing requirement of \$100,800 for 2015 under section 2, "General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management", would be required under the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 to implement the additional workload. No provision has been made in the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 for the implementation of the activities requested under paragraphs 31 and 40 of the draft resolution. At the current stage, it is not possible to identify

activities within the section of the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 that could be terminated, deferred, curtailed or modified during the biennium. It is therefore necessary that additional resources in the amount of \$100,800 be provided through an additional appropriation for the biennium 2014-2015.

It may be recalled that, under the procedures established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget for those years. If additional expenditures were proposed that exceeded the resources available from the contingency fund, the activities concerned will be implemented only through the redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or the modification of existing activities. Otherwise, such additional activities would have to be deferred to later in the biennium.

Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/69/L.1, it is estimated that an additional appropriation of \$101,800 would be required. It is anticipated that this requirement cannot be met from within the resources of the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015. Accordingly, the General Assembly is requested to approve an additional appropriation representing a charge against the contingency fund in the amount of \$101,800 under section 2, "General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs and Conference Management," in the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015.

The attention of the General Assembly is therefore drawn to the present statement of programme budget implications. During the main part of the sixty-ninth session, the Fifth Committee will examine both a detailed statement of the programme budget implications arising from the draft resolution and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions thereon.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.1, entitled "Outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples". May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.1?

*Draft resolution A/69/L.1 was adopted (resolution 69/2).*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See for a statement.

**Monsignor Urbanczyk** (Holy See): First, I wish to congratulate the President on convening this high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly, known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. My delegation has worked hard in a constructive way and in a spirit of goodwill to make the outcome document (resolution 69/2) a success. On the other hand, my delegation would be remiss in its duty if it did not point out areas where it strongly disagrees with the text. In that regard, my delegation wishes to make the following reservations on paragraph 13 of the resolution.

With reference to sexual and reproductive health and so-called reproductive rights and other language on which the Holy See registered reservations at the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and at the Fourth World Conference on Women, we reiterate these reservations as set out more fully in the report of the ICPD and in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In particular, the ICPD rejects recourse to abortion for family planning and denies that it creates any new rights in this regard. My delegation will continue to respect and promote the rights of the indigenous peoples.

Finally, my delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate the long-standing commitment of the Holy See to promoting the integral development of the more than 370 million indigenous people in the world.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express my sincere thanks to Ms. Marjon Kamara, Permanent Representative of Liberia, and Mr. Andrej Logar, Permanent Representative of Slovenia, who so ably and patiently conducted the discussions and complex negotiations in the informal consultations in order to bring them to a successful conclusion. I am sure that members of the Assembly join me in extending our sincere appreciation.

Representatives are reminded that the first and second interactive round tables will be held concurrently this afternoon at 3 p.m. in Conference Room 4 in the General Assembly Building and the Trusteeship Council Chamber, respectively.

Interactive round table 1, entitled "United Nations system action to implement the rights of indigenous peoples", will be co-chaired by Her Excellency

Mrs. Edita Hrdá, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations, and Mr. Ghazali Ohorella, Representative of the Pacific Indigenous Region.

Interactive round table 2, entitled “Implementing the rights of indigenous peoples at the national and local level”, will be co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. David Choquehuanca, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and Mr. Joseph Ole Simmel, Representative of the African Indigenous Region.

The third interactive round table and the interactive panel discussion will be held concurrently tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m. in the North Lawn Building in Conference Room 4 and the General Assembly Hall, respectively.

Interactive round table 3, entitled “Indigenous peoples’ lands, territories and resources”, will be

co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Pita Sharples, Minister of Maori Affairs of New Zealand, and Ms. Joan Carling, Representative of the Asia Indigenous Region.

The interactive panel discussion entitled “Indigenous priorities for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda” will be co-chaired by Ms. Patricia Balbuena, Vice-Minister for Interculturality of Peru, and Ms. Jannie Lasimbang, Representative of the Asia Indigenous Region.

I wish participants profitable discussions.

I would like to express special thanks — I think we all do — to two people: Ms. Mirna Cunningham and Mr. Les Malezer, who have been at the service of this historic meeting. They have been at the service of all representatives of indigenous peoples. Once again, I wish participants very profitable discussions.

*The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.*