

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Thirteenth session
New York, 12 - 23 May 2014

Statement of the GCG
Delivered Friday 23 May 2014

Thank you Madam Chair for the opportunity to address the statement delivered by Ambassador Gregoire on behalf of the President of the General Assembly in relation to the modalities of the high level plenary meeting to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

We note that no decision has been taken by the President of the General Assembly beyond calling for a meeting of the General Assembly. We would therefore call upon all member states to uphold the modalities resolution and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and urge the President of the General Assembly to show leadership based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

We express our extreme disappointment at the President of the General Assembly's failure to exercise decisive leadership as well as a failure on the part of some states to recognize and uphold our right to full and equal participation in decisions that affect us remains a stumbling block for this process. This impasse clearly demonstrates that member states are unable to recognize and realize our rights as Indigenous Peoples. Such a negative position jeopardizes this process and is a serious setback for the relationship between indigenous peoples and states.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms that Indigenous Peoples are equal to all other peoples. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also affirms the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples which derive from our political, economic and social structures, our cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially our rights to our lands, territories and resources. Our engagement in the high level plenary process seeks to address the pressing and ongoing violations of our rights as Indigenous Peoples.

We have prepared for and participated in the high level plenary process on the basis of good faith and in a spirit of openness and transparency. We have a clear and reasonable expectation that our rights as recognized by the UN will be upheld and implemented in the high level plenary process. It is important to note that we are not demanding anything new; we simply wish to ensure that the UN adhere to the peremptory norms of equality and non-discrimination in the recognition and realization of our rights as Indigenous Peoples.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes and affirms Indigenous Peoples right to participation in decisions affecting their rights. The high level plenary meeting is about the realization of Indigenous Peoples' Rights as aptly noted in the conclusion of the UN Secretary General's report entitled, "Ways and means of promoting participation at the United Nations of indigenous peoples' representatives on issues affecting them" A/HRC/21/24, which states: "To the extent that it has been permitted to date, indigenous peoples' participation at the United Nations has been a positive experience. It has enabled indigenous peoples who had been historically excluded to work together peacefully and in partnership with States to advance their issues and rights. It has been a process of mutual trust-building, premised on equality and equity among stakeholders, and has led to fruitful outcomes and greater commitments by indigenous peoples, States and the United Nations system to strengthen recognition and respect for indigenous peoples' rights. It is hoped that this spirit of openness and continuing collaboration with indigenous peoples will be improved by further enhancement of procedures to enable indigenous peoples' participation in all relevant work of the United Nations, in a way that realizes, respects, promotes and protects their rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other relevant international human rights standards."

Thank you Madam Chair.

The recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples in this Declaration will enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the State and indigenous peoples, based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith,
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- To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
- To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and