

OLIVER LOODE's STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 3c (YOUTH SUICIDE AND SELF-HARM) – April 21

I thank representatives of indigenous peoples and member states for their statements. While the topic at hand is indeed somber, I am glad that the discussion took place.

This is a life and death issue and therefore an opportunity to make UNPFII truly meaningful and relevant, because what could be more meaningful for the Forum than saving young indigenous lives? Whether this goal is realized, depends largely on the *outcomes* of this discussion – in particular, what kind of recommendations will be adopted on this agenda item by the Forum, and how these recommendations will be implemented. It is highly important that this does not remain an isolated discussion that stays within the walls of this conference hall but that it will lead to concrete actions towards easing this grave problem.

Let me also offer a few observations about the discussion that took place.

Suicide and self-harm is a problem that disproportionately affects indigenous youth, ie that suicide rates among indigenous youth tend to be significantly higher than among non-indigenous youth. None of the speakers stated that suicide rates among indigenous youth similar or lower than in non-indigenous populations. Moreover, indigenous youth suicide is not an issue that affects only rich or poor countries, or only certain continents – it is an issue of truly global proportions. Also, apparently there is a general understanding of root causes of indigenous youth suicide. Moreover, there is a body of practices, institutions and policies for preventing indigenous youth suicide on national and to some extent international level (e.g., Arctic region). In particular, the Sami Mental Health Center in Karasjok was presented as a good practice. However there does not appear to be global coordination on this issue.

I completely support my colleague Joseph Mutangah who stated that a global problem requires global attention. Obviously UN must play a central role in this.

For this reason I share the concern of my colleague Mariam Aboubakrine about the lack of representation of WHO during this discussion. Nor did any other UN agency consider it important to make a statement on this topic. To me, this in itself is significant data point in trying to understand the current situation.