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17th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

New York, 2018

**Item 10: Human Rights
18 April 2018, Conference Room 4**

Intervention by Chair of UNVFIP, Mr. Binota Moy Dhamai

Madame Chair, distinguished members of the Forum, Chairperson of the EMRIP, the UN Special Rapportuer on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, representatives of indigenous peoples, civil society and international organizations, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to take the floor to address the 17th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples (UNVFIP). At the outset, I would also like to welcome the 35 beneficiaries of the Fund who are present with us, making an important contribution to the success of this session. In the same occasion, I would also like to seize this opportunity to acknowledge the current members of our Board of Trustees, namely: Ms Anne Nuorgam (Finland), Ms. Claire Charters (New Zealand), Mr. Diel Mochire Mwenge (DRC) and Ms. Mirna Cunningham (Nicaragua).

Madam Chair, the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples was established in 1985, when the voice of indigenous peoples at the United Nations was still very hushed/muted. With a mandate that has been expanded seven times, over the past 33 years, the Fund has supported the participation of over 2,000 indigenous women, men, youth, elders and indigenous persons with disabilities in human rights mechanisms and contributed to

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important developments on indigenous issues from the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to the establishment of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, expansion of the mandate of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People and adoption of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document.

In this sense, we have come a long way in opening the doors of the United Nations to indigenous peoples by increasing their participation and their visibility within the organization; by giving indigenous peoples a voice in UN meetings which directly affect their lives, the Fund contributes to increased international awareness of the rights, status, and conditions of indigenous peoples worldwide. Over the years, Madam Chair, we are increasingly seeing the results of the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples' representatives in the work of human rights bodies, resulting in specific recommendations for the promotion, respect and fulfilment of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Madam Chair, I want to highlight that the beneficiaries of the Fund are indigenous representatives who are victims of human rights abuses, indigenous human rights defenders and those who are actively promoting positive change in policies or actions of government or relevant non-state actors in the area of human rights. The Fund supports indigenous representatives who would not be able to attend meetings without the assistance provided by the Fund and those who would be able to contribute to a deeper knowledge on these mechanisms and bodies of the problems affecting indigenous populations. By participating in international fora, the grantees of the Fund have been able to use international processes to

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address human rights violations they face at home, complementing action taken at the domestic level.

In addition to providing financial support to enable the participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations meetings, the Fund allocates resources to build the capacity of indigenous peoples to make them truly effective participants in those meetings. For example, in partnership with the Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research and Information (DOCIP), the Fund organizes human rights training modules in Geneva and New York, in the margins of the sessions of EMRIP and the Permanent Forum, to increase the capacity of indigenous peoples' representatives to effectively participate in human rights mechanisms. This year's session of the PF, the Fund has organised two trainings in total.

In cooperation with non-governmental organization partners based in Geneva, the Fund provides assistance to indigenous peoples' representatives in targeting their advocacy, making constructive interventions tailored to each United Nations event and contributing to the implementation of the recommendations made by human rights mechanisms and those contained in the UNDRIP at the national level. In addition, through the Fund's Secretariat at OHCHR, the Board encourages grantees from countries with OHCHR field presences to cooperate with these presences in follow-up activities to implement the recommendations formulated by the human rights mechanisms, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the impact of grantees at the national level. In addition, Madam Chair, the Board would like to acknowledge EMRIP in inviting the Fund to its coordination meeting with the other IP Mechanisms and hope that the Forum will also extend the same invitation to the Fund.

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Madam Chair,

Over the past decades, the mandate of the Fund has been expanded 7 times, and now supports the participation of Indigenous representatives also in the General Assembly consultations on enhanced participation. During 2017, the UNVFIP supported 93 indigenous representatives for the 16th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII); the 10th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Treaty Bodies, 27th session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group, and the Human Rights Council session and the President of the General Assembly Consultation Process Aiming to Enhance the Participation of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives in United Nations Meetings on Issues Affecting Them.

This year 2018, the Board has agreed on a cost plan of the Fund with envisaged expenditure of approximately USD 650,000. So far 35 indigenous representatives have been selected as grantees for the 17th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII); 30 grantees for the 11th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, 30 indigenous grantees will receive support for representatives of indigenous communities and organisations to attend the sessions of the Human Rights Council, the UPR Working Group, and the treaty bodies that will take place from April 2018 to March 2019; and 28 grants for representatives of indigenous organisations and institutions to attend the President of the General Assembly Consultation process aiming to enhance the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives in United Nations meetings on issues affecting them.

Madam Chair, the uncertainty about the future contributions continues to impact the delivery of our mandate. The numerous expansions of the mandate of the Fund created new

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opportunities for indigenous peoples to voice their concerns at the UN, which is extremely positive, but it also means increasing demands for support. The work of the Fund is supported by means of voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities. The Fund would not be in a position to carry out its mandates without sustainable financial support. In this regard and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the governments of Argentina, Australia, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Holy See, Mexico, Norway, Peru, Spain, Turkey and Germany for their generous contributions to the Voluntary Fund in 2017-2018.

We must strive to pursue our collective effort towards the full participation of those most directly affected and thus seek to achieve the effective realisation of Indigenous Peoples' rights, as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. With particular reference to paragraph 38 of the Outcome Document of the World Conference, I would like to appeal to all Governments and also private entities to consider supporting the vital work of the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Thank you Madam Chair.