

**UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Thirteenth Session**  
New York, 12-23 May 2014

***Agenda Item 7***

*On going priorities and themes and follow up*

*(c) Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People*

**Joint statement on the continued lack of alignment of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention with the UNDRIP**

Statement by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA);

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**Thank you Madam Chair:**

1. The Programme of Action for the Second Decade, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, urges UNESCO to establish mechanisms to enable indigenous peoples to participate effectively in its work relating to them, such as the... nomination of indigenous sites in the World Heritage List and other programmes relevant to indigenous peoples."
2. As the Permanent Forum is aware, Indigenous peoples have repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of regard for their rights in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention) and have expressed serious concerns not only about violations of Indigenous rights in existing World Heritage sites, but also about violations of Indigenous peoples' participatory rights when sites in their territories are added to the World Heritage List.<sup>1</sup>
3. Last year the Permanent Forum in its report welcomed the recommendations of the International Expert Workshop on the World Heritage Convention and Indigenous Peoples (Copenhagen, September 2012), which are aimed at making the implementation of the World Heritage Convention consistent with the UNDRIP.

**Madam Chair,**

4. We were happy to read in UNESCO's report on the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Second Decade, submitted to this session of the Permanent Forum, that "the principle of FPIC is being incorporated into the operational guidelines of a number of key UNESCO programmes, including World Heritage".
5. However we do not see much evidence to be able to share this assessment with regard to the World Heritage Convention.
6. Moreover, preliminary discussions in a working group of the Committee revealed strong reservations and opposition among Committee members to including provisions related to Indigenous peoples and their rights in the Operational Guidelines,

7. Discussions during the World Heritage Committee meeting clearly showed that most Committee continued to reject any inclusion of references to indigenous peoples and their rights in the Operational Guidelines. In the end it was decided to postpone the discussion until after the UNESCO Executive Board has taken a decision on the UNESCO Policy on Indigenous Peoples which is currently under development. The Committee's plan is for the issue to be reconsidered at its 39<sup>th</sup> session in 2015.
8. We are concerned that there has not been much progress on the UNESCO Policy since the last session of the World Heritage Committee, due to budget constraints but also a lack of priority given to Indigenous issues within UNESCO. This is particularly concerning because the adoption of the Policy is now stated as a prerequisite for the inclusion of safeguards on Indigenous rights in the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention.

### **Recommendations**

9. We therefore call on the Permanent Forum to urgently engage in a dialogue with UNESCO and to offer its assistance with the development of the Policy, to help ensure that the Policy is quickly finalized and is in line with the principles of the UNDRIP.
  10. We also encourage the Permanent Forum to increase its engagement with the World Heritage Committee and the individual Member State delegations, and to participate in the annual sessions of the Committee.<sup>2</sup> Until today the recommendations of the Permanent Forum have not received sufficient attention from the Committee and most of the recommendations have not been implemented.
  11. In particular, we call on the Permanent Forum to keep insisting that the World Heritage Committee revise its *Operational Guidelines* to ensure that the World Heritage Convention is implemented in accordance with the rights enshrined in the UNDRIP. We recommend that the Permanent Forum reiterate its offer of assistance in that regard.
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