

Check against delivery

Tenth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Geneva, 10-14 July 2017

**Agenda Item 7: Indigenous peoples' participation in the United Nations
system**

Statement by Ms. Anne Nuorgam

on behalf of the

Board of Trustees of the

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples

Mr Chair-Rapporteur of EMRIP, colleagues in the Permanent Forum, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, representatives of indigenous peoples and international organization, Your Excellencies: I thank you for giving me the opportunity to take the floor to address the 10th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples (UNVFIP). Let me first congratulate you, Mr Chairperson on your re-appointment as Chair of this session.

At the outset, I would also like to welcome the twenty beneficiaries of the Fund who are present with us, making an important contribution to the success of this session.

Mr Chair, over the years, the mandate of the Fund has been expanded seven times, in order to support the participation of Indigenous peoples in an increasing number of human rights mechanisms and to contribute to important developments on indigenous issues that take place at the international level. Since its establishment, the Fund has enabled over 2,000 indigenous women, men, youth, elders and indigenous persons with disabilities, many who have been historically excluded from decision making processes, to participate and self-represent their nations and organizations in UN processes leading to major human rights achievements such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

Peoples, the establishment of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document and the development of international human rights jurisprudence on the rights of Indigenous peoples by human rights mechanisms.

Mr 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.

Mr Chair, Your Excellency (ies), Ladies and Gentlemen, let me now give you an update on the activities of the Board in 2016-2017.

In 2016, the Fund has supported 98 representatives from indigenous peoples' organizations and communities in the sessions of the Permanent Forum (25), the EMRIP (20), the Human Rights Council (2), including its Universal Periodic Review (1), and of treaty bodies (9).

Moreover, the Fund also supported two extra-ordinary meetings convened to follow up the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. These meetings were the OHCHR Expert Workshop to Review the Mandate of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (14), and the General Assembly Consultation Process Aiming to Enhance the Participation of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives in UN Meetings on Issues Affecting Them (27). The participation of the beneficiaries of the Fund at these two meetings was crucial to their success.

In 2017, the Fund has supported 49 indigenous representatives have been selected as grantees: 25 grants for the 16th session of the Permanent Forum (PFII); 20 grants for the 10th session of EMRIP; and 4 grants for representatives of indigenous organizations to attend the 27th session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group.

Additionally, the Board recommended the allocation of 30 grants 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 July 2017 to March 2018; and 21 grants for representatives of indigenous organisations and institutions to attend the General Assembly Consultation Process Aiming to Enhance the Participation of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives in United Nations Meetings on Issues Affecting Them.

Mr Chair, the numerous expansions of the mandate of the Fund created new opportunities for indigenous peoples to voice their concerns at the UN, which is extremely positive, but it also means increasing demands for support. A case in point, for the sessions of the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism alone, the Fund received over 500 applications as opposed to 301 applications in previous year. An annual basis Mr Chair, we are able to fund barely a quarter of our applicants.

Mr Chair, 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, Estonia, Finland, Holy See, Mexico, Norway, Peru, Spain, Turkey and Germany for their generous contributions to the Voluntary Fund in 2016-2017.

In the spirit of the 10th year anniversary of the Declaration, I would like to conclude by saying that 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 to consider supporting the vital work of the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples. I thank you.