

**EMRIP A.I. 8: UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples****Thursday, July 23, 2015****U.S. Intervention**

Thank you. The principles contained in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – including self-governance, autonomy, empowerment, and decision-making – are precepts that have long guided U.S. government policy. Since 2010 the United States has redoubled efforts to have U.S. policy follow the Declaration's objectives, which we think are vital guideposts for all member states. The Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Environmental Protection Agency, Interior, and State, as well as the White House and others, utilize the Declaration as a guide. In close partnership with tribal leaders, we look to the Declaration to aid in formulating Indian Country policy to enhance empowerment of tribal communities and to address the challenges they face.

As one example, the President every year holds the White House Tribal Nations Conference. Many of the issues addressed in the Declaration are precisely the issues addressed at this conference. This meeting has taken place for the past six years during the November-December timeframe, and it has become a recurring event. U.S. government officials – including Cabinet secretaries and other senior-level staff – have interactive dialogues with members of the 567 U.S. federally recognized tribes. The December 2014 conference included new breakout sessions on “International Issues” and “Mental Health and Substance Abuse Issues.” The February 2015 report entitled “Investing in the Future of Tribal Nations,” prepared in connection with the meeting and posted on the White House website, contains detailed descriptions of our federal policies and programs related to U.S. indigenous peoples. It outlines actions to strengthen the

government-to-government relationship with tribes; expand opportunities for Native American youth; advance sustainable economic and infrastructure development; improve health care, public safety, and education; protect Native American lands and the environment; and promote respect for their cultures, among other topics. And to keep the conference timely, emerging issues are placed on the agenda every year.

We also invite you to visit the White House website, at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov), to learn about developments related to indigenous peoples since the February 2015 report appeared. There you will find the latest information on Generation Indigenous, the Cabinet Youth Listening Tour, and the July 9 White House Tribal Youth Gathering.

The Declaration will continue to guide the U.S. government as we collaborate with tribal governments to improve the situation of U.S. indigenous peoples. Thank you for your attention.