

**Statement by International Chief Wilton Littlechild, I.P.C.,
Chairperson of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
13th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 12-23 May 2014
Agenda Item 3: Report of the international expert group meeting: Sexual health and
reproductive rights: articles 21, 22(1), 23 and 24 of the UN *Declaration on the Rights
of Indigenous Peoples*
12 May 2014**

Good morning, Chairperson, Permanent Forum Members and all delegations. I welcome the Report of the international expert group meeting: Sexual health and reproductive rights: articles 21, 22(1), 23 and 24 of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. I would like to thank the Permanent Forum for inviting the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to participate in the Expert Group Meeting. It is critical that the Expert Mechanism, the Permanent Forum and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples continue to work together in a collaborative way during our respective sessions and meetings in order to strengthen the recognition of the human rights of Indigenous peoples within the United Nations system and beyond.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Chair of the Expert Group Meeting, Maria Eugenia Choque Quispe (Member of the UNPFII), and the Rapporteur, Alfonso Barragués of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), as well as all the experts and participants that contributed to the successful outcome of the meeting.

The Expert Mechanism has examined the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights in relation to its studies, in particular those on the right to participate in decision-making and on access to justice, which contain relevant Advice and conclusions.

I would like to commend the Permanent Forum and the experts who participated in the meeting for taking a broad and holistic approach to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights. From a human rights standpoint, it is fundamental that we follow an approach that recognizes the autonomy and dignity of every human being to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives. While the right to health is undoubtedly a key component of sexual and reproductive rights, these rights also include the rights to life, to be free from discrimination, to be free from torture and ill treatment, to privacy, to decide the number and spacing of one's children and to information.

From a human rights perspective, it is also important to emphasize that non-discrimination and equality are fundamental to protecting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of Indigenous individuals. For example, in relation to access and quality of sexual and reproductive health care, this means that Indigenous individuals have the right to equal access to high quality care, compared to non-Indigenous individuals, a right that remains unfulfilled in many regions of the world. On numerous occasions, the Expert Mechanism has affirmed the importance of non-discrimination, particularly in relation to Indigenous women. In this regard, as noted in the report of the Expert Group Meeting, we must work together to address the structural barriers to the full realization of the sexual and reproductive rights of Indigenous peoples, including the

legacy of colonization and the multiple discrimination that Indigenous women and girls face. For Indigenous people with disabilities, particularly Indigenous women with disabilities, this is further compounded.

Another issue that the report highlights is access to effective legal remedies for violations of sexual and reproductive rights. I would like to point out that this is an issue that the Expert Mechanism has addressed in its forthcoming Follow-up Study on access to justice in the promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples: restorative justice, Indigenous juridical systems and access to justice for Indigenous women, children and youth, and persons with disabilities, which will be presented at our seventh session (7-11 July 2014).

I would like to end by expressing the Expert Mechanism's strong support for the movement toward ensuring the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples, and particularly Indigenous women and youth, in the development and implementation of laws, policies and programmes relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Hai Hai. Thank you.