

Madame Chair, distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, delegates, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, and special guests,

IOM was indeed pleased to work in cooperation with ^{our} ~~the~~ many partners ~~represented here on this panel~~, and to be here today to help "set the stage" on this very important topic of urban indigenous peoples and migration. ~~The purpose of this Expert Group Meeting (EGM) was to assess the impact of migration on indigenous peoples, and to look at the policies, good practices and underlying factors, patterns and characteristics regarding migration to urban areas by indigenous peoples, with special focus on the violation of their rights.~~

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my UN + Habitat
colleagues*
To put the topic of urbanization in some context, the UN released earlier this year *World Demographic Trends* which estimates that by next year, there will be more urban dwellers in the world than rural inhabitants, which marks a new phenomenon in the history of mankind. Already in 2005, there was an estimated 3.2 billion living in urban settings. Out of the nearly 200 million migrants in the world today, we do not have abundant data on how many in this group represent indigenous peoples, and we have limited information on their migration process. Even less data is available on indigenous peoples' migration to urban areas. This scarcity of data prevents adequate policy-making on migration issues as they specifically regard indigenous peoples, despite the increased attention on this issue. Indigenous peoples who migrate face important challenges that, while not different than those faced by migrants in general, do have specific peculiarities that relate to their ties to their ancestral territories and lands. This leads us to realize that we need to take into account the important considerations in the complex decision for indigenous peoples to migrate including their opportunities to return to their original territories, and we must also realize that in some cases indigenous peoples do not have the opportunity to make an informed decision to migrate.

This EGM looked at some of the push factors of indigenous peoples' migration including poverty, but also realized that the loss of their traditional lands due to armed conflict or government policies, including those with respect to development projects also serve as important push factors in the urbanization of indigenous peoples. In general, several experts noted that the urbanization process is associated with a number of negative experiences including alienation that may devastate their indigenous identity, belief systems, language and culture, and also adversely affect their health due to changes to their customary diet. Indigenous peoples' rights are often times violated when in transit and after arrival to host societies. For that reason it is essential that there be a human rights focus for indigenous peoples' entire migratory process.

However, though indigenous peoples have a specific ancestral tie to their territories, and may face particular challenges in their urbanization process, we must not take this to imply a homogenous migration experience for all indigenous peoples. For example, it was highlighted by one of the experts that the Pacific indigenous communities living in urban areas are heterogeneous which requires caution in placing them under labels and categories that wrongly homogenise their diverse experiences. Just as there is a

diversity of indigenous peoples themselves, also their migration experience will be different depending on a number of factors including their decision to migrate, whether their migration was voluntary or involuntary, and their experience in their place of destination.

Moreover, it was noted that some indigenous peoples move to urban areas because of several pull factors relating to employment and educational opportunities, improved access to health and housing services, and also increased political participation, social recognition and visibility or other benefits that they may lack in their territories. For example, one expert noted that in eastern Africa, pastoralists living in urban areas benefit from more safety and wider availability of food aid, and send remittances to their areas of origin to help alleviate poverty. The experts noted that some indigenous peoples are aware that life in their territories based on subsistence agriculture only is unfortunately ~~no longer possible~~ ^{at times quite difficult}, and indeed urbanization becomes their only opportunity for survival. Another expert noted that indigenous peoples migrate to cities consciously to ensure the survival of the traditional way of life in their territories through urban-rural remittances. Others considered the commercialization of indigenous arts, crafts, dances, medicines as income-generating activities to ensure their survival. Citing these examples, it was strongly emphasized that indigenous peoples living in urban areas are able to still benefit from the natural wealth of their ancestral lands; in this context one of the overriding themes of this EGM was the necessity to realize that those members of indigenous peoples migrating to urban centres do not leave their identity behind and we must not divide urban and rural members of indigenous peoples. Their rights and identity should be considered wholly irrespective of whether they live on their territories or in urban areas.

The experts also emphasized the challenges that local and national governments as well as the international community are faced with as a result of indigenous peoples' increasing migratory flows and mobility, specifically to urban areas. In this regard, one expert put forward the idea of organizing a symposium on local government best practices in multi-cultural cities to identify and promote the participation and integration of indigenous peoples into the governance process. Two experts proposed experience exchanges at national or regional levels, including programmes specifically tailored for the youth.

We must examine the urbanization of indigenous peoples from a resilience framework, and acknowledge the uniqueness and adaptability of indigenous peoples which have helped sustain them for centuries and contribute to their own development. In order for indigenous peoples to benefit most from their urbanization, their migration should be based on a well-informed choice, and be an orderly and humane process. I would like to conclude on the broader topic of indigenous peoples and migration, by announcing that IOM has recently made available a draft working paper entitled *Indigenous Routes: A Framework for Understanding Indigenous Migration* and copies of this work are available in the back of the room. Finally, I would like to thank on behalf of IOM, the Government of Canada for their support of this workshop, and our partners in collaboration, UN-Habitat, OHCHR, PFII and its secretariat and ECLAC.

↳ this paper explores IPs ~~and~~ internal & international migration, & with respect to transborder communities