



Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union

By

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**Item 9:
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EU statement, 22 May 2014

Madame Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union. We take this opportunity to express our support to the Forum as an important venue for the promotion of dialogue between governments, representatives of indigenous peoples and the UN system. We welcome the active discussions during this session of the Permanent Forum and the valuable inputs provided by all participants and look forward to a continued active dialogue in the coming days.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Madame Chair,

The respect for human rights and equality are core principles of the European Union and its global action includes combating discrimination and exclusion. The EU strategic Framework and Action Plan on human rights and democracy, adopted in 2012, reiterates the EU commitment to the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly in the context of combating discrimination. The EU seeks to integrate human rights into all aspects of its external policies, and prioritizes the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples across the globe.

We reaffirm our support to the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which marked a significant milestone for all of us – member states and indigenous peoples. As we have noted previously, the Declaration is an important instrument for promoting human rights. However, the realization of the Declaration rests upon on the determination and continued commitment to the implementation of its objectives. We encourage all efforts to achieve the objectives of the Declaration so as to ensure full respect for the rights of indigenous peoples.

Last year, on August 9, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton paid tribute to the enormous contribution that the traditions and knowledge of indigenous peoples have made to the world's cultural heritage, but also to defenders of indigenous peoples' rights, who in many countries are exposed to particular risks and acute repression, as shown by a number of international reports, including those by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.

The EU action on indigenous issues includes financial support. The EU has incorporated the cooperation with and assistance to indigenous peoples as part of its broader development agenda. The EU continues to support civil society organisations working on indigenous issues, in particular through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). In addition to local funding to various projects, in

2013 the EIDHR funding helped support the International Labour Organisation in advancing the implementation of Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in countries which have ratified it. Furthermore, in 2013 the EU also launched a call for project proposals under the subject "Combating discrimination against indigenous peoples" under EIDHR.

The EU has, in the context of its Strategic Framework on Human Rights, undertaken to review and further develop EU policy relative to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, also with a view to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

We also note the importance of indigenous issues and the engagement of indigenous peoples in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

Madame Chair,

We would like to express the support of the EU for the three core UN mechanisms addressing indigenous issues and rights: the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples; the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Through their discussions and recommendations they help guide our steps to tackle the challenges faced by indigenous peoples. We would like to take the opportunity to express our particular thanks to the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Mr. James Anaya, for his commitment to the improvement of the situation of indigenous peoples throughout his mandate. We also appreciate highly the work of Mr. Anaya in increasing the coherence and systematic cooperation between the three UN indigenous mechanisms. We welcome the appointment of Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz as the new UN Special Rapporteur and look forward to future cooperation with her.

We also welcome the initiative taken by the Forum to further enhance its methods of work, including through means to better focus its outcomes and enhanced alignment with other UN institutions and bodies.

Madame Chair,

In 2011, the General Assembly decided to convene a high-level GA plenary meeting to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. The General Assembly unanimously agreed upon the modalities of the Conference in its resolution 66/296 in September 2012. We reiterate our full support to the Conference and reaffirm our call for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and civil society. We recall, in this regard, the commitment of the General Assembly – which we strongly share - to ensure consultations with the Member States and representatives of indigenous peoples to ensure a meaningful and inclusive process.

We therefore fully support the proposal of the President of the General Assembly to appoint two state representatives and two representatives of indigenous peoples as his advisors for the negotiation process of the Conference outcome, which is consistent with the decisions taken by the General Assembly regarding WCIP. We express our concern regarding the delay in the preparations for the GA high-level meeting and urge the PGA to take prompt decisions and action in this regard, including by

organizing an informal interactive hearing with representatives of indigenous peoples and other stakeholders, as reaffirmed by the President of the GA in the Forum discussions last week.

We join colleagues in underlining the importance of the successful realization of the World Conference. We believe that it should make a strong contribution to the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples and the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Madame Chair,

Significant advances with regard to indigenous peoples' rights have been made during the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. We welcome the progress made in the achievement of its goal and objectives, but also urge the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to make use of the existing mechanisms to ensure that those objectives that have not yet been achieved in the second decade will be achieved within a reasonable time.

Thank you.