

**EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (EMRIP)****10<sup>TH</sup> SESSION, JULY 10 – 14, 2017****UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA SWITZERLAND**

*Agenda Item no. 7 Indigenous peoples' participation in the United Nations as follow-up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples*

**Statement of the 2017 Indigenous Fellowship Programme**

Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, distinguished experts, Indigenous peoples' representatives, and all my relations – dagoteh and ahe'ye'e, greetings and thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of the **Indigenous Fellowship Programme** through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

This year, we are celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the programme, giving us the opportunity to look back at what previous Indigenous Fellows have been able to accomplish both at the local, regional and international levels as a result of their training, examining the current status of the Programme, and contemplating its continuous evolution.

Since 1997, the programme has advanced the participation of indigenous peoples and ensuring their access to the UN system, and human rights instruments and mechanisms, including those specifically dealing with indigenous issues. The Programme has provided vital exposure to these mechanisms, for example, in some countries, the first shadow reports to the various Treaty Bodies on indigenous issues resulted from previous Indigenous Fellows, *e.g. CRPD from Mexico, CEDAW from Colombia and CERD from DRC*. This tells us that the programme is vastly successful, because Indigenous Fellows have proved to be better equipped to assist their organizations and communities in protecting and promoting their rights.

Chair, now I will update you on the current activities and the future of the program. A total of 33 Indigenous Fellows from 25 countries, of whom are 20 indigenous women and 13 are indigenous men, arrived in Geneva just over three weeks ago. The programme afforded each of us an in-depth and experiential learning on the UN system, mandates, activities, international human rights instruments and mechanisms, including those specifically dealing with indigenous issues, through rigorous and interactive training sessions. The program is currently available in four languages – English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Following tradition, the 2017 Indigenous Fellows have reviewed applications for 2018 Indigenous Fellows. There is an unprecedented amount of applications this year – over 1,400 indigenous peoples have applied. Although the programme has expanded over the years, the amount of time for the training has been significantly shortened, from one year to just one month, thus the intensity of the training sessions. In the past, Indigenous Fellows also participated in the Permanent Forum in New York and UNESCO in Paris, which were very valuable components of the programme, however these opportunities are no longer included.

In light of this information, we recommend that this Programme should grow along with the mounting interest by indigenous peoples. We recommend to OHCHR the strengthening of the national and regional components of the Programme to facilitate the capacity building needs of indigenous peoples and at the same time, ensuring that the content of the programme is closer to the realities of indigenous

peoples on the ground. We recommend to the UN system in general, and to the UN Country Teams in particular, to tap former fellows as resource in their work, projects and activities on indigenous issues at the country, regional and international levels and at the same time, consider former fellows as intermediary between the UN and indigenous organizations. We further recommend to OHCHR to ensure and facilitate the meeting of former fellows, in conjunction with the proposed Indigenous Youth Forum in 2018 being organized by the Indigenous Youth Caucus and the FAO, in order to take stock and review the progress of the Programme.

I will conclude by extending an invitation to all human rights experts, civil society, indigenous peoples, previous Indigenous Fellows, and government representatives to our side event tomorrow, Thursday 13 July 2017 at 13:15 in room XXIV. Come learn more about the Indigenous Fellowship Programme, and engage in an open dialogue on past reflections, current experiences, and future plans for the programme.

Ahe'ye'e