

UNITED NATIONS



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**Opening remarks by
H.E. Mr. Martin Sajdik
President of the Economic and Social Council**

at the

**Thirteenth session of the
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issue**

**General Assembly Hall (NLB)
United Nations Headquarters, New York
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Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues,

Distinguished representatives of Member States, Indigenous Peoples'
Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations,

Distinguished representatives of the UN system and other
intergovernmental organizations,

Distinguished Elders, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to address the opening of the Thirteenth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. I am pleased to see so many indigenous peoples here today. I am equally pleased to see so many Member State delegations that are coming to participate in the Permanent Forum. The Permanent Forum is such an important occasion that brings together indigenous peoples, Member States and the UN system in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation to exchange ideas, learn from one another and make concrete proposals to address the well-being of indigenous peoples across the globe. Indeed this is what the Economic and Social Council envisioned when it established the Forum in the year 2000. There must be improvements in the relationship between indigenous peoples and governments. This is important work and the Economic and Social Council takes this work seriously.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

A lot has changed in the work of the Economic and Social Council over the past years. The Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference gave ECOSOC the mandate to play a key role in the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; that is, economic, social and environmental. This key role of the Council was also recognized in the establishment of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development.

Last September, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/1 in which it strengthened the role of the Council. There are four aspects of the UN General Assembly resolution that I would like to highlight.

First, ECOSOC will lead the system through an issues-based approach and will select an annual theme. The annual theme will be for the entire ECOSOC system to be addressed, as part of their respective agendas. Each subsidiary body is expected to address the annual theme from its own perspective and provide substantive inputs to the Council.

In 2014, the main theme is the same as the theme of the Annual Ministerial Review which is “Addressing on-going and emerging

challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future”. This is a broad theme upon which the Forum has certainly a lot to say.

Secondly, the Council has established an integration segment aimed at consolidating inputs from various sources, including subsidiary bodies, on how best to ensure a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The first integration segment, which will be held later this month, will be devoted to “sustainable urbanization”.

I recognize that synchronization of the agenda setting process of ECOSOC and the entire system is needed. We hope to work with the Chair of the Forum and the Bureau to address this dimension.

As far as the process of providing inputs is concerned, the subsidiary bodies will have to identify the best ways to consider the ECOSOC themes. The Forum may therefore wish to review its agenda to identify opportunities for addressing ECOSOC issues and providing targeted contributions that will allow for indigenous issues to appear fully in the Council’s deliberations in future.

Thirdly, the Council is expected to conduct action-oriented reviews of the activities, reports and recommendations of its subsidiary bodies. To facilitate this process, resolution 68/1 requests all ECOSOC subsidiary bodies to include in their reports an executive summary and to clearly identify recommendations and substantive issues that

require further attention by the Council. I am confident that the Forum will adopt an appropriate format for its report to the Council.

Fourthly, the annual report of this Forum will now be considered at one of the Council's Coordination and Management Meetings (CMM), which are held at various times in the course of the year. The Forum is scheduled to report to the Council at its July CMM. This will provide an opportunity for a closer engagement of the Chair with the Council on the outcome of the current session. At the same time, the Council would like to encourage more exchanges among subsidiary bodies which can lead to cross-fertilization of ideas and more comprehensive policy responses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me get back to the issue of urbanization to illustrate how a body such as the Permanent Forum can contribute to the work of the Council. We now live in an era where half of the world's population live in urban areas. There is no doubt that the impact of urbanization is being keenly felt by indigenous peoples across the world, and carries both potential and serious consequences for their culture, heritage and connection to their traditional lands as well as socio-economic opportunities. The forced displacement of many indigenous peoples is

often due to a range of reasons including militarization and conflict, climate change, natural resource extraction activities as well as poverty and economic disparity.

In the cities, indigenous people suffer major disparities and often live in poor human settlements outside the support of their communities and their culture. At the same time, living in cities can be a positive experience for indigenous peoples and has the potential to provide many opportunities for improving their socio-economic conditions. It is therefore important that governments and urban planners cooperate with indigenous peoples in the provision of employment and economic development opportunities.

It is also important to maintain strong links between countries and regions of origin and destination, in order to ensure continuity in indigenous children's relationship with their families as well as their cultures and identities. Further analysis and recommendations in this regard would be of great interest to the Council in its deliberations on sustainable urbanization.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Permanent Forum is an important member of the UN Family. The recommendations that have come from this vibrant body continue to inform and educate us all.

You have ahead of you two weeks of hard work and important discussions. I wish you good fortune in your work and I look forward to following the deliberations and the conclusions of the session. We at ECOSOC are committed to the success and impact of the Permanent Forum.

You can count on the commitment of the ECOSOC Bureau in taking forward your expert advice and recommendations to the Council and to the UN programmes, funds and agencies on better integrating and coordinating activities on indigenous issues.

Thank you.