

**WCIP Roundtable 2: “Implementing the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the National and Local Levels”**

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**United States statement by Jodi Gillette**  
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Co-Chairs, distinguished panelists, Excellencies: thank you for this opportunity to highlight notable developments within the United States. The President places a high priority on working with U.S. tribes, and the U.S. government held formal consultations with U.S. tribal leaders and other indigenous representatives to hear their expectations for the World Conference which has helped us to shape our work in preparation for this Conference.

The U.S. government is committed to improving the lives of U.S. indigenous peoples and their ensuring their communities are prosperous and resilient. We continue to strengthen our government-to-government political relationship with U.S. federally recognized tribes when formulating our broader policy objectives. Executive Order 13175 mandates regular, meaningful consultations between the U.S. government and U.S. federally recognized tribes on issues affecting the tribes.

A prime example of how Indigenous governments’ voices are incorporated into our policies is the White House Tribal Nations Conference. This conference is now an established annual event where President Obama delivers remarks and he and his high-level appointees engage in important dialogue with tribal leaders to set the policy priorities for the year. At the fifth conference in November 2013, 13 Cabinet secretaries, dozens of senior U.S. officials, and more than 300 tribal leaders gathered for a constructive discussion. We held breakout sessions on priority topics that tribal leaders identified: self-determination and self-governance of tribal governments; healthcare; economic and infrastructure development; education; protecting natural and cultural resources; climate change; natural disaster mitigation; and law enforcement and public safety. The 2013 White House Tribal Nations Conference Progress Report, which is available online for each of the conferences since 2010, describes the many tribal-related U.S. government policies and programs in place.

Last November’s Tribal Nations Conference was the first of these annual meetings where tribal governments spoke directly with members of the White House Council on Native American Affairs. The Council, established by the President in a June 2013 Executive Order, is comprised of the heads of U.S. government departments, agencies, and offices. It allows for improved high-level information exchange and coordination among Federal agencies. Its five focus areas – tribal economies, health and nutrition, education for Native American youth, law enforcement and public safety in tribal communities, and cultural and natural resource protection and the environment – are among the major concerns of indigenous peoples.

The spring 2013 Violence Against Women Act reauthorization addressed a major jurisdictional issue that deeply concerned U.S. tribes. This latest reauthorization contains a new provision that restores the right of indigenous tribes to prosecute non-Native perpetrators of violence against indigenous women for acts that occur on tribal lands. This is particularly important, given that indigenous women and girls in the United States face disproportionately high rates of domestic

violence. The Act also continues effective programs and expands the protections and services available to survivors of violence.

As part of our efforts to correct the wrongs of the past, we have resolved historical grievances concerning the mismanagement of tribal trust funds, trust lands, and non-monetary resources such as water rights. The Keepseagle and Cobell Settlements were among the high-profile cases settled. These lawsuits have been a source of considerable contention between U.S. tribes and the U.S. government, and we now look forward to moving into a new era with our tribes as partners.

We are grateful for the work and persistence of the indigenous governments and peoples for all of the important efforts to ensure that we are respecting and honoring the principals outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Let me close by thanking James Anaya, former Special Rapporteur and a member of this panel, for his efforts in the UN system on behalf of indigenous peoples. We benefited from his views and recommendations throughout his tenure, including during his 2012 visit to the United States.

Thank you for your attention.