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UNDP Opening Statement

13th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Item 3

“Principles of good governance consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: articles 3 to 6 and 46”

12 May 2014

(3:00 - 6:00 p.m.)

Trusteeship Council Chamber

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Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to whom we extend our congratulations on your appointment, Members of the Permanent Forum, Chairperson of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Special Rapporteur to whom we also extend our warmest congratulations on your appointment.

Excellencies, Distinguished Indigenous Representatives and Colleagues,

I thank you for this opportunity to address this august body on the eve of several important global events, in particular the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. As the Head of UNDP's Democratic Governance Group and Chairperson for UNDP's liaison committee, I want to assure you of UNDP's highest commitment in supporting the advancement of the rights of indigenous peoples.

UNDP welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the work of the United Nations Permanent Forum and, in particular, to focus on what we can do collectively to address the governance and human rights challenges that affect indigenous peoples.

As we know, robust, responsive and inclusive institutions are a fundamental pillar for the overall advancement of human rights. Recognizing indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, autonomy and self-governance is an important feature of an inclusive society. Equally important is to respect the right of indigenous peoples to determine their own development priorities, to participate in governance and decision-making processes at all levels and to ensure the availability of consultative mechanisms that build on the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

Relationships between state institutions and indigenous peoples that are underpinned by a human rights-based approach and that respect the indigenous concept of “development with culture and identity”, are an important step towards respecting the specific needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples. This is particularly true with regards to their collective rights to land, territories and natural resources.

A better understanding of indigenous systems of governance, which are often misunderstood, is an important step in this process; given UNDP's extensive range of activities related to indigenous issues, it is an area that we would be most eager to collaborate on.

Time does not permit me to delve in depth into UNDP's many governance related initiatives that have a direct relation to or impact on indigenous peoples. However, I would like to provide a few highlights.

As part of our Parliamentary Development programme we have been supporting, with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, an initiative called ["Building Inclusive Parliaments for Indigenous Peoples"](#) which aims at promoting the effective representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in parliament. In collaboration with the Permanent Forum and other partners, a Handbook for parliamentarians on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will be launched at the upcoming World Conference.

UNDP has also supported the Permanent Forum to deepen the analysis on the participation of indigenous peoples in electoral and political processes.

UNDP's recently launched Global Initiative on Extractive Industries also addresses governance issues in natural resource management, including

facilitating dialogues with affected populations, especially indigenous peoples.

Through our Global Anti-Corruption programme we are also addressing how corruption in natural resource management directly affects indigenous peoples and their communities.

Additionally, the Global Environment Facility is operational in over 129 countries worldwide and assists indigenous peoples in combating destructive development, for human well-being and for the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, including Community Conserved Areas and Territories. The programme respects customary law and practice and supports the securing of rights to land and resources and the participation of indigenous peoples in environmental governance efforts.

The UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries has a specific focus on indigenous peoples and has made progress in many of its 51 partner countries to support indigenous representation in national decision-making

processes and advance country-level efforts to respect the principles of free, prior and informed consent.

UNDP's recently approved Youth Strategy seeks to address exclusion, discrimination and inequality and promotes a human rights-based approach to further advance the participation of marginalized young men, and women and youth from indigenous, ethnic and minority groups.

Most of UNDP's work with indigenous peoples is taking place at the country level, in places as diverse as Bolivia, Kenya, Namibia, the Philippines, Guatemala and many others.

These were just some of the many examples that demonstrate that advancing the rights of indigenous peoples is at the centre of UNDP's development agenda.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Indigenous Representatives and
Colleagues,**

I would like to conclude my intervention by reflecting on recent debates with regard to the post 2015 development agenda, in particular on the importance of governance, and links with the objectives of the World Conference.

More than 2 million people from more than 190 countries have participated in the consultations on the “World we Want” with dynamic participation witnessed from indigenous representatives. The World Conference is an opportunity to contribute to the shaping of the future development agenda and to ensure that the concerns and priorities of indigenous peoples are integrated.

There is growing international advocacy for more credible and effective systems of governance and accountability. There is also an expectation that the post-2015 development framework will be people-centered and human rights-based. Tackling exclusion and inequalities, that affect the most marginalized peoples will require addressing the imbalanced power

dynamics at local, national and international levels that perpetuate the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

Respect for the rule of law and inclusive access to justice are vital in this process, and further research is needed to explore synergies between indigenous systems of governance and mainstream notions of governance, principles and values.

When working in synergy, indigenous systems of governance can add value to decision-making processes, especially in matters of local governance and the delivery of services. Indigenous peoples and their institutions can also play a vital role in the implementation and monitoring of development initiatives.

They are proactive and positive actors in the overall socio-economic development of their communities and society, and can contribute to strengthening the overall credibility and legitimacy of state processes.

Indigenous peoples should thus be provided the means to strengthen their own organizational and governance capacities to be able to meet the

challenges faced by their communities and that have a profound impact on their environment and ways of living.

I thank you for your attention.