

**Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America**

**Item 3: World Conference on Indigenous Peoples**

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**July 9-13, 2012; Geneva**

Thank you. Member states and indigenous groups continue to discuss possible modalities for the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. This topic was addressed during the May 2012 session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, and we are pleased that EMRIP is turning its attention to this issue.

The United States co-sponsored UN General Assembly Resolution 65/198, which contained the decision to organize a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the World Conference. Our support for this World Conference is consistent with the U.S. government's policy to honor and strengthen its relationship with Indian tribes and include Indian Country in its broader policy initiatives. In that spirit, we are pleased to take part in this discussion and to help ensure appropriate and broad participation by indigenous peoples' representatives.

The United States favors holding the World Conference in the spring of 2014, either before or after the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. A spring 2014 meeting would facilitate the fullest participation from indigenous representatives, who will already be in New York attending the Permanent Forum. We would support a meeting of one or two days, to be funded by voluntary contributions.

We support an inclusive preparatory process, and we do not at this time have a strong view on which of the various options would be preferable. One option is to have prepcoms in the five UN regions, with the regional economic commissions holding meetings. Another option is to hold prepcoms in the seven indigenous regions – Africa, Arctic, Asia, Latin America, North America, Pacific, and Russian-speaking – so that indigenous representatives can travel to those locations easily. A third option is to hold prepcoms in Geneva or New York. We would urge that the cost implications of these options be investigated and considered before making a final decision.

We note that hearings with civil society on how to structure civil society engagement at the World Conference could provide an important platform to hear the views of important stakeholders. During the PFII's discussions of this topic this spring, we requested more information from the PFII secretariat and the President of the General Assembly's office on how they see hearings being structured as part of the process. We would also like to know whether there might be a mechanism for input – either in written, electronic, pre-recorded, telephonic, or other format – from indigenous peoples and others, as many indigenous representatives in particular may not be able to afford to travel to New York to be present in person at the World Conference.

The United States further believes that roundtables can be a useful way to allow for indigenous peoples' meaningful participation at the World Conference. We believe that the themes for the roundtables need not be limited to the Declaration, but also should be visionary and focus on current best practices. Possible topics could include:

- Tribal self-determination and governance.
- Lands, resources, the environment, and economic development.
- Cultures of indigenous peoples, including education.
- Consultation with and participation from indigenous peoples.
- Business and its impacts on indigenous peoples.

The United States would like to see a short, clear, and action-oriented outcome document. The outcome document should have targeted, concrete proposals on protecting the collective rights of indigenous peoples and human rights of indigenous individuals. There could be a longer Chair's text that summarizes the roundtable discussions on substantive issues.

We look forward to continued work on modalities for the World Conference to facilitate greater engagement, greater representation, and greater consultation, which is the foundation for building stronger indigenous communities. Thank you for your attention.