



**Remarks
by**

**H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations
General Assembly**

OPENING OF THE SESSION

**Special theme of the Thirteenth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues “Principles of good governance consistent with the
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: articles 3
to 6 and 46.”**

**New York
12 May 2014**

Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
President of the Economic and Social Council,
Distinguished Elders,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,
Distinguished Representatives of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address this Thirteenth (13th) Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. As I do so, I also take this opportunity to congratulate Professor Dalee Sambo Dorough on her election as Chairperson of the Forum.

I also wish to warmly welcome to UN Headquarters all who have come from various regions of the planet to participate in this important event. This year's theme focuses on good governance consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with special reference to its articles 3, 6, and 46 (3), which reaffirms the rights to self-determination and nationality, and will give you an opportunity to compare the significant progress made at international level with the realities at national level.

Distinguished Guests,

Your presence here today attests to the priority that you attach to your engagement with the international community; it shows your commitment to ensuring that the community understands well and respects the aspirations of your peoples, and the challenges that you face in fulfilling them; and it likewise demonstrates your determination that the community show greater support for the priorities you have set for yourselves.

The best way to strengthen such understanding and support is through dialogue. To its great credit, since its establishment, the Permanent Forum has rendered valuable service in terms of strengthening dialogue between indigenous peoples, Member States and the UN system. The Forum's body of work on thematic issues has enabled an understanding of what might be the most useful approach to stimulating and strengthening such dialogue. It has also deepened our understanding of the issues that mean the most to indigenous peoples.

Ladies and Gentelmen,

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples shows significant common ground between the development concerns of the indigenous peoples and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But MDGs outcomes for indigenous people have fallen short of expectations. One of the lessons of this is that policies designed to promote universal access to culturally sensitive social services have been inadequate, and the international community needs to reconsider its approach.

In the context of elaborating the post-2015 Development Agenda is, it has been frequently observed that the core concerns of indigenous peoples, both at the national and the international levels, should be recognized in a clear and forthright manner. This would entail an explicit assertion of your collective rights, and that, among other things, the special conditions and needs of the women, the children, the youth and the disabled members of the indigenous community be given a place of priority. This point has, of course, been made with particular emphasis by the various indigenous representatives of civil society who have participated in the events that I have organized in the context of the theme of the 68th session of the General Assembly: the post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage.

In addition, recent development discussions on the Post-2015 Development agenda have also brought to light the universal relevance of values which are particularly dear to the indigenous peoples, such as the freedom from discrimination, the right to live in freedom, peace and security, the protection of biodiversity, good governance, the sustainable management of natural resources, cultural diversity, to cite only a few.

In fact, in last week's General Assembly's Thematic Debate on culture and development, many Member States recognised the essential contributions of culture to development, which has been highlighted as a priority among indigenous peoples. At this debate, we heard numerous calls for the post-2015 development framework to fully integrate the role of culture and cultural diversity into the broader goals of promoting economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

Let me also add that the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples will conclude at the end of this year. The final report on the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Second Decade, and its impact on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be available to Member States. I am confident that this report could serve as an input to the discussions on the Post-2015 development agenda.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Side by side with the evolution of these discussions on the future development agenda, I have also been engaged, as President of the General Assembly, in implementing a mandate, which I received from the Assembly in its Resolution 66/296. In that resolution, the Assembly decided, that it would hold, in September 2014, a high level meeting, to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, the first of its kind to be held in the United Nations context. The unprecedented nature of this decision is an acknowledgment of the changes taking place in the relations within as well as among states.

In the section describing how the meeting should be organized, the GA resolution called for a process of consultations between Member States and representatives of the indigenous peoples so as to prepare the draft of the Outcome Document of the Conference. My first challenge in this regard, to which I started to address myself in the very first days after my election to the Presidency last June, was to establish among Member States, a mutually agreed basis for the consultations to be undertaken. So far, all sides with a stake in this matter have been unable to identify an acceptable formula. But I wish to assure you all that my efforts are continuing, even as we sit here this morning.

Please be assured that my team and I am deeply mindful of your concerns, especially about the need for an inclusive process that will ensure a World Conference that effectively addresses the most serious challenges confronting indigenous peoples. I also want to underscore that we remain committed to ensuring that the required consultations are convened and that all the necessary requirements will be in place in order to hold a successful Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the meantime, however, I wish to announce the convening of the Interactive hearing soon after the Permanent Forum. This event will provide the opportunity for dialogue between representatives of the indigenous peoples on the one hand, and, on the other, representatives of the United Nations system, and a variety of sectors of national society. It has been mandated by the Assembly in its Resolution 66/296 as a channel for providing input into the preparatory process for the World Conference.

The effectiveness and the success of the Interactive Hearing will naturally depend on the kind of use you make of this Forum that begins today; and on the quality of the ideas and the programmes that you generate. At the end of the day, no one knows better than you the challenges you face and the importance of drawing maximum international attention to your situation. This Forum provides you with an opportunity to make the wisest use of the opportunity that begins today. There is simply no choice but to do so. After this Forum concludes, we can and should focus on the mechanisms that will make the September 2014 conference a success, and that you,

the representatives of the indigenous peoples of the seven regions of the world, contribute to and subsequently benefit from the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

I thank you.
