

**Canadian Statement – To be delivered by Senior Assistant Deputy Minister
Mary-Luisa Kapelus**

**14th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Regional Meeting: Africa and North America Regions**

Monday 12 July, 2021

8:30 – 11:30am (Ottawa) / 14h30 – 17h30 (Geneva)

***Item 3: Draft Study and Advice on the Rights of the Indigenous Child under the United Nations
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***

and

***Item 8: Draft Report on efforts to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Self-Determination***

Thank you, Chair. I speak to you today from the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples. I want to thank the EMRIP for their two reports.

I begin by expressing profound sadness about the discovery of First Nations children's remains at a growing number of former residential schools, including in Kamloops and Marieval. The mistreatment of Indigenous children at residential schools is a tragedy, the impacts of which are still being felt today. Canada is committed to supporting the intergenerational survivors, families, and communities throughout their healing journeys.

Since 2016, Canada committed financial support to meeting the health, education, and social needs of First Nations children based on Canadian Human Rights Tribunal orders. Also, jointly with Inuit leadership, an Inuit-specific Child First Initiative was launched in 2019 to help children access the products, supports, and services they need, when they need them.

As part of its commitment to reform child and family services, the Government also worked with Indigenous partners to co-develop the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. Coming into force in 2020, the *Act* enables Indigenous communities to transition toward exercising partial or full jurisdiction over child and family services.

Canada recognizes the United Nations Declaration as a foundational element for reconciliation and for re-balancing the relationship between the State and Indigenous Peoples. In June, Canada enacted legislation to guide the federal implementation of the Declaration, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples.

Building on past investments, Canada's recent federal budget announced historic investments to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities during the pandemic and to create new opportunities for people living in Indigenous communities.

In June 2021, Canada also released the co-developed National Action Plan on ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-spirit LGBTQIA+ peoples, as well as the Federal Pathway, which outlines Canada's commitments and contributions.

We will continue to support Indigenous-led processes for rebuilding and reconstituting their historic nations, advancing self-determination, affirming and implementing Indigenous rights, and moving away from the *Indian Act*.

Canada remains committed to addressing historical wrongs and providing resources and the support to all those impacted by the legacy of residential schools. This important work is just the beginning. The implementation of Indigenous rights, including self-determination and rights of the child, is pivotal to advancing the vital work of reconciliation.

Thank you.

(Word Count: 389, max 3 Minutes)