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## UNEP STATEMENT

UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES, 15<sup>th</sup> SESSION,

10 May 2016

Jamil Ahmad, Deputy Director, UNEP New York Office

Agenda Item 4 - Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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Mister Chair, Excellencies, Colleagues and Representatives of Indigenous Peoples,

It is my honour to address this year's UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme and our Executive Director Achim Steiner. I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election and wish to assure you of our continued support to the Forum as a committed member of the Inter-agency Support Group as well as to the implementation of the system-wide action plan.

UNEP is continuously improving its engagement with partners including Indigenous Peoples to enhance environmental sustainability and to realize the 2030 Agenda, while ensuring that UNEP projects and activities respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, reflecting their perspectives and needs.

The timely and critical topic of this year's session on conflict, peace and resolution relates closely to human rights and the environment, since indigenous peoples are often at the forefront when conflicts over access to and use of natural resources and land arise.

UNEP has a long history of working on disasters & conflicts from an environmental perspective, including having responded to crisis situations in more than 40 countries. Recent work includes the collaborative research project on *Mediating Natural Resource Conflicts - Guide for Mediation Practitioners* carried out jointly with the Policy and Mediation Division of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA/PMD). This guide collects and summarizes good practices for the successful mediation of conflicts related to natural resources and aims to support mediation professionals and institutions involved in local or transboundary natural resource disputes, or in peace processes where natural resources play a critical role.

(<http://www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts/>)

Through UNEP's collaborating Center, Grid Arendal, we also initiated the documentation of impacts of industrial development on reindeer husbandry such as the Wind farm construction impacting on reindeer migration and movement corridors.

[In 2014, GRID-Arendal together with international partners – the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry (ICR), the Association of World Reindeer Herders (WRH), local partners in Mongolia and the Russian Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) – submitted a proposal for a GEF Nomadic Herders project. If funded by the GEF, this will be the largest international collaboration project focusing on reindeer husbandry, Indigenous Peoples and the environment.]

UNEP is currently preparing the second United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) which will immediately follow this Forum, from 23-27 May at its Headquarters in Nairobi, under the overarching theme of: *Delivering the Environmental Dimension of the 2030*. UNEA-2 will bring together environmental leaders in an unprecedented week of policy making, networking and dialogue for the global environment. The Assembly will be preceded by a Science and Policy Forum and the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum bringing together representatives of all major groups to discuss relevant issues including: Understanding the challenges and new opportunities at the Science-Policy Interface, and how indigenous Knowledge as well as Citizen Science can contribute to advance the monitoring of the SDGs.

Mr. Chair, each year an average of 26.4 million people are displaced from their homes by natural disasters. This is the equivalent to one person every second. Environmental change and mismanagement often plays a role in the root causes of displacement. Meanwhile conflicts over the access to, and use of, natural resources can, indirectly, lead to further internal displacement and refugee flows. Displacement itself can have environmental impacts, causing environmental degradation. The International Organization of Migration predicts there will be 200 million environmentally-displaced people by the year 2050 with major effects on countries of origin, transit countries, as well as receiving countries.

Therefore, UNEA-2 will also encompass a symposium on *"Environment and Displacement: Root causes and implications"*, with the objective to focus attention of policy makers on various dimensions of environmental degradation and displacement, both at present and in the future. Related discussions will take into account current projections of climate change and land degradation and the 2030 Agenda including as 'bridge' between the humanitarian and development spheres.

Furthermore UNEA-2 will provide a timely opportunity to discuss the steps needed to achieve sustainable pastoralism and responsible production and consumption of livestock. We look forward to a fruitful collaboration with our partners in FAO, IUCN, IFAD and ILC, CIRAD, GRID Arendal and UNCCD and the governments and pastoralists networks who are supporting these efforts.

In conclusion, UNEP is looking forward to welcoming all of you at the Environment Assembly in Nairobi, to work together and to share perspectives on the issues that will be discussed there. We invite you to assist us in realizing true partnerships towards achieving the Agenda 2030, reflecting Indigenous Peoples and local communities' needs and visions. Please consider following the proceedings of UNEA-2 also through webcast.

Thank you, Mister Chair.