



European Union

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
Fifth Session  
(Geneva, 9 – 13 July 2012)**

**Statement**

**on behalf of the European Union**

**Geneva, 11 July 2012**

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union is pleased to address the meeting of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We attach great importance to the role of EMRIP as one of the core UN mechanisms addressing indigenous issues. We are confident that the deliberations during this session under the chairmanship of Mr Littlechild contribute to providing thematic advice and building a shared vision regarding proposals to be made to the Human Rights Council.

The EU has a longstanding engagement towards indigenous peoples which is anchored in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We have made human rights a central aspect of EU's external action: be it in the political dialogues with partner countries, be it through action in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, or be it through development policy and assistance. Indigenous peoples' rights, as defined in the UN Declaration, form an integral part of all these aspects the EU's human rights policy. Moreover, the new EU Human Rights Strategy adopted in June commits the EU to taking a new look at our policy on indigenous peoples and further developing it in the context of the UN Declaration and in preparation for the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. At the same time, the EU continues providing direct support to civil society organisations working on indigenous issues, in particular through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, under which there is wide scope for specific actions to be implemented at the country, transnational or regional levels regarding empowerment, capacity-building and antidiscrimination.

This year we are celebrating the fifth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples along with ever-increasing commitment from Governments to promote its implementation. Five years ago the EU strongly supported the General Assembly resolution adopting the Declaration after decades of negotiations, and our support remains as strong as ever. The Declaration is an important instrument for promoting human rights, but its full implementation is key to the actual enjoyment of those rights. The EU has repeatedly called on all states to make this a reality for all and the EU is encouraged to note Rio+20 recognizing the importance of the Declaration in the achievement of sustainable development.

The adoption of the Declaration in 2007 was an important milestone for indigenous peoples. The EU welcomes the increased international consensus on the Declaration - notably that the four states who voted against the resolution have in the meantime endorsed it. But adopting a declaration alone is not enough: despite improvements, a wide gap continues to exist between the promises of the Declaration and the reality of its application on the ground.

The EU will continue to work towards achieving its full implementation and we call on all partners to make contributions in this regard and to increase their efforts to ensure the full respect of the rights of indigenous peoples.