

Check against delivery

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Thank you Mme Chair.

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum,

Distinguished elders, representatives of indigenous peoples,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is pleased to participate once again in the Permanent Forum. The Forum is not only a crucial platform for dialogue but also a source of concrete recommendations for us to take action on. As you can see in the report we submitted to this session, OHCHR has pursued a range of initiatives that are rooted in recommendations of the Forum, on issues ranging from isolated indigenous peoples, to the implementation of treaties and other constructive arrangements. These are, of course, all issues linked to the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which remains our common framework for action.

We are in the midst of two major processes that can have a significant impact on our efforts to advance the rights of indigenous peoples, namely the preparation for the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and the development of the post 2015 Development agenda. OHCHR is actively engaged in both processes. For example, in respect of the World Conference, we will have an opportunity to build on the discussions here and in Alta, at the EMRIP session in July in Geneva and in a Human Rights Council panel to be organized on this topic in Geneva in September.

One of the Office's key tasks is to ensure strong support to the indigenous mandates supported by OHCHR, including SR, EMRIP. One factor in ensuring the success of these mechanisms is strong and informed participation of indigenous peoples representatives, and we are pleased to be able to contribute to this outcome, including through our indigenous fellowship programme and through our support to the Voluntary Fund, which has, as you have heard from the Chair of its Board, once again brought and trained impressive indigenous advocates to take part in this session.

While such engagement with indigenous mandates, including the Special Rapporteur, EMRIP and PF, is indeed crucial, it is also important to ensure that indigenous peoples can effectively participate in human rights

mechanisms with more general mandates. Thanks to the recently expanded mandate of the Fund, indigenous peoples now have stronger support to take part also in HRC and its UPR process as well as in human rights treaty bodies. We are already seeing how such interaction helps to enhance the scope and depth of the engagement of these mechanisms with indigenous peoples and results in targeted findings. For example, in recent treaty body jurisprudence we see not only increasing references to the Declaration but also first examples of references to the thematic studies of EMRIP.

We need to advance the rights of indigenous peoples on all fronts, and use all relevant tools. And there are new, promising tools that can be put to use. The latest important news in this respect is the entry into force, on 5 May 2013, of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, introducing a complaint mechanism for violations of this Covenant. Bearing in mind the serious shortcomings that exist in the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous peoples, we would like to encourage the use of this new mechanism in the countries where it is already in force and to encourage other State Parties to ratify this important protocol as soon as possible.

These international developments are indeed significant, but much of the focus of the OHCHR work is at the country level, where, as we all know, the reality for indigenous peoples is all too often far below the Declaration and other standards endorsed at the international level. With our field presences, we are trying to address such gaps, through initiatives ranging from support to strategic litigation by indigenous peoples to advancing communal land titling for indigenous peoples. We are also about to issue new guidance for national human rights institutions on how they can advance the implementation of the Declaration in their work.

Much of our country-level work is carried out in close cooperation not only with indigenous peoples' representatives and States but also with our UN partners. A prime example of this is UNIPP. Co-chaired by OHCHR since its launch, UNIPP is now fully operationalized, with one regional programme and six country programmes aiming to turn the promise of the Declaration into a reality on the ground. First results are indeed promising, as you will see in the progress report issued this week.

The Office of the High Commissioner looks forward to continuing to work closely with the UN Permanent Forum and its secretariat and all other partners in this room to advocate for and advance the rights of indigenous peoples.

