



Statement on behalf of the European Union

By

**Mr. Rafael de Bustamante
First Counsellor
Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

**Economic and Social Council
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**Item 10:
Future work of the Permanent Forum, including issues considered by the Economic and
Social Council and emerging issues**

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Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of the European Union, I am honoured to address the 15th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues on this important agenda item. (As it is the first time that the EU takes the floor during this session please allow me to congratulate you on your election as the chair for the Permanent Forum).

First of all, the EU wishes to commend the efforts of the Permanent Forum in ensuring the effective follow up of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) outcome document. Let me also congratulate the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and the UN system for their successful efforts in this regard. The EU contributed actively towards the consensus adoption of the action oriented Outcome document of the Conference.

EU policies on Indigenous issues date back to the 1990s. At that time, the Council adopted a resolution on Indigenous peoples within the framework of EU development cooperation. The EU's is currently in the process of reviewing its policies on Indigenous peoples so that they are coherent with the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples. The EU is integrating indigenous peoples' rights into all aspects of the EU's external policies.

As a testament to this, indigenous issues figure prominently in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, 2015-2019, adopted in July 2015. The new Action Plan brings a strengthened focus on the human rights that are most heavily affected by an increasingly globalised production, trading and business environment. We intend to develop capacity and knowledge on Business and Human Rights, and in particular in regard the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles. In this context we would like to reiterate our gratitude to the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz on her in report to the 70th Session of the General Assembly.

Furthermore, under the Action Plan, we will step up effort to protect human rights defenders, with a particular focus on those working on labour rights, land-related human rights issues, and indigenous peoples in the context of inter alia land grabbing and climate change.

Of particular relevance to the theme of this year's PFII session on conflict, peace and resolution, we would also point to the Actions plan's section on ensuring a comprehensive EU approach to conflict and crisis. Emphasis is put on supporting the role of women in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding, but also on the establishment of prevention, response and reintegration programmes for children affected by armed conflict.

The 2014 WCIP Outcome document has been a source of inspiration for us. Since then and in line with our Action Plan, the EU has been working on a new policy document on indigenous issues that we expect to finalise this year.

The European Union is convinced of the need of ensuring the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples at various levels when policies affecting them are developed. As part of our work we have organised consultations with indigenous peoples' representatives. We are grateful to the contributions from these consultations, which were crucial for the elaboration of our policy document.

The EU participated and contributed to the discussions, this spring in Geneva, pertaining to the review of the EMRIP. Without pre-empting the outcome of these discussions, we would like to reiterate our support for the rights based approach taken by EMRIP. We also support the inclusive working methods of EMRIP, by ensuring the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples at various levels but also by engaging academic expertise. The positive complementarity and close cooperation between the three indigenous peoples' mechanisms needs to continue in the future.

We expect that our Policy Document will be published by the end of 2016. We have high expectations that the results of this work will bring an added visibility to EU's engagement on indigenous issues. Furthermore, it will help us enhance our contributions to the implementation of the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

Mr. Chairperson

Thank you for your attention.