

Remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the 13th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, UN Headquarters, 12 May 2014

I'd like to sincerely congratulate you for your election to the Chair of this Forum [Ms. Dalee Sambo Dorrough] -- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples. You can count on the Secretariat and I wish you all the best.

I am honoured to join you as we open this Thirteenth session of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

This Permanent Forum is a vital mechanism to ensure that the international community listens to the voices and concerns – the hopes and aspirations -- of indigenous peoples in every corner of the world.

Since it was established in the year 2000, the UN Permanent Forum has become recognized as the world's primary arena for deliberations of issues related to indigenous peoples.

Its success depends on the extent to which different partners - Member States, indigenous peoples, UN agencies and others – continue to work closely together to identify creative solutions for some of the most complex and intractable problems affecting the indigenous peoples.

Forging win-win solutions for all is your responsibility and your challenge.

Over the years, we have made much important progress at the United Nations to advance rights and expand opportunities for indigenous peoples.

Along with this Permanent Forum, we have established two other important tools: the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

And in 2007, Member States adopted the landmark UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This year, we have a number of critical opportunities to build on our progress.

It begins with the high-level event of the United Nations General Assembly, known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

I know this has been a matter of much discussion, and that there are strongly held views, which, I fully understand.

I want to use this opportunity to encourage Member States and indigenous peoples to find a way forward and proceed with a World Conference that builds on the UN's strong commitment to the involvement of indigenous peoples in defining solutions for our common future.

Success will depend on Member States and indigenous peoples working together in a constructive and flexible manner, while respecting diverse perspectives.

I count on the President of the General Assembly, Member States and indigenous peoples' groups to demonstrate the leadership and political will needed at this time.

As with any collaborative process, building trust is essential.

This year will also mark the end of the Second Decade on Indigenous Peoples.

We are all aware that we continue to face many challenges in realizing the rights of indigenous peoples. From language to land, from poverty to participation, indigenous peoples continue to face discrimination, exploitation and the disproportionate impacts of societal harms.

We must continue to work together to help consolidate achievements as we strive to make the UN

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples a living document.

At the same time, the ongoing process to define the development agenda beyond 2015 is absolutely crucial.

The needs, voices and contributions of indigenous peoples will be a critical part of these efforts.

One vital area of focus is climate change.

Indigenous peoples are often on the frontlines of this existential challenge.

I have seen that time and again in my visits around the world.

On September 23rd, I will convene a Climate Summit at the United Nations focused on action and solutions.

The traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples can help to close the emissions gap and lead us onto a more sustainable path. I urge Member States to recognize the central role of indigenous peoples in meeting the climate challenge.

During this Thirteenth Session of the Permanent Forum, you have taken on the overarching theme of good governance.

Indigenous peoples around the world must have the right to determine their own priorities, and maintain their traditions, cultures and identity.

As you launch your discussions, I want to reiterate the commitment of the United Nations and my own personal resolve.

You can count on my full support for the rights of all indigenous peoples to live a life of dignity, peace and well-being.

I wish you a very successful and productive session.

Thank you, Madam Chair.