

# The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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## Closing Remarks by the Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Professor Ole-Henrik Magga

Dear excellences [*vilka som nu är där*] indigenous sisters and brothers, state representatives, representatives of the UN agencies and not least, dear colleague Permanent Forum members. As you all know, this is the last time I address this Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as Chairperson of the Forum. At the end of year, a number of the Forum members, including myself, will complete our term in the Permanent Forum. I would like to immediately stress, however, that this does not mean that we will leave you. I - and I believe that I hear also speak of the Saami people as a whole - am committed to continue to work for the future success of the Permanent Forum, also when I am no longer a member. To the future members of the Permanent Forum, should you ever desire my assistance, I am there for you.

It has been an enormously tough, but also a very stimulating, task to be the first Chairperson of the Permanent Forum. When we started this journey, we were 16 members, where many of us had little experience with this kind of work. We had no resources, no rules of procedure or other guidelines for how to conduct our affairs, and no resources. Furthermore, the Permanent Forum was a new kind of body in the UN system, with which the World Organization and its agencies were not accustomed, and did not know how to interact with. This was the reality that my colleagues in the Forum and myself had to face when we started to build up the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The Forum has now been in existence for two years, and three sessions. I believe that we should all be very proud of what we have accomplished during this brief period of time.

During this relatively short period of time, we have managed to establish a secretariat of the Permanent Forum, which I assure you, took a lot of efforts. I here would

like to extend my greatest gratitude to all member states that supported the Permanent Forum in this task. Also otherwise, a lot of my work as Chairperson of the Permanent Forum has been devoted to get the logistics in place. I am happy to say that to a substantial extent, it is now there.

Despite that we have had to devote much of our time during the Forum's first years of existence to logistic issues, we have also managed to start to address our thematic mandate areas, and have commenced addressing the particular needs, concerns and problems that the world's indigenous peoples are facing. We have adopted a large number of recommendations, many of which are in the face of being implemented. I firmly believe that in our report from the three sessions of the Permanent Forum so far, we have touched upon many of the deepest concerns that indigenous peoples share, as well as have identified what the UN system can do to address those problems. Thus, if we manage to effectively implement the recommendations already adopted, the Permanent Forum will have come a long way in carrying out our mandate. In addition to the concrete recommendations adopted, I also believe that we have managed to raise the awareness in general of indigenous issues in the UN system. This is very important, since this is really what the Permanent Forum is all about; to make sure that the UN system organizations, in all their activities, pay attention to the particular situation of indigenous peoples. To again refer to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, I believe that - through our joint efforts - we have started the process of creating a home for our selves in the UN system.

The Permanent Forum would never, however, have been able to start building this home in the UN system on our own. We are extremely fortunate to have many friends, from all quarters. The support from states, the UN agencies and not least indigenous organizations have been absolutely imperative for the Permanent Forum's success during its first years in existence. I would here like to particularly mention the Inter-Agency Support Group and the Friends of the Permanent Forum. Your continued support to and cooperation with the Permanent Forum is absolutely imperative to make the Forum effective in its work. I encourage states that have not yet joined the Friends of the Forum and agencies that have not joined the Inter-Agency Support Group to do so. The Forum wants and needs to cooperate with you. I also would like to particularly mention the organization DOCIP. Without DOCIP's amazing support, many indigenous organizations would not be able to participate actively in the Forum's sessions. I would like extend my deepest gratitude to states, indigenous and other organizations, the UN agencies and not least my colleagues in the Permanent Forum. Without all of your contributions, support and efforts, we would never have made it.

Still, and that said, I leave a Forum where a lot remains to be done. I am aware that many of you - state, indigenous and agency representatives alike - have serious concerns regarding the organization of the Permanent Forum session. Allow me to assure you that all of the Permanent Forum members are aware of your concerns. Indeed, we share many of them. We are constantly seeking new challenges and more sophisticated and efficient ways to conduct our affairs. At the third session, the Forum members have extensively discussed the methods of work of the Forum. I think that those of you that will return to the fourth session will find that we have considerably rearranged the structure of our session, in an attempt to more effectively carry out our mandate. In this context, I would particularly like to stress that I believe absolutely imperative that the Permanent Forum finds methods of work that allow the Forum members to more efficiently interact with the UN agencies. Also, we have to develop mechanisms that allow the Permanent Forum to better respond to reports of human rights violations from indigenous peoples. Moreover, as regards the implementation of the Permanent Forum recommendations, I think that the Forum needs to develop a deep cooperation with the member states and regional organizations.

I leave the Forum with great confidence that the Permanent Forum will be successful in all these tasks, and reiterate my commitment to support the Forum and its members in their future work. I call on all participants here to do the same - indigenous, state and agency representatives alike. If you identify a problem in the Permanent Forum's methods of work, try not to complain. Rather, try to think of ways how you can help the Forum to become more efficient. I stress again, the Permanent Forum cannot do anything on its own. Only if indigenous peoples, states, the UN agencies and the Forum members join forces can the Permanent Forum become the dream we all share - a body in the UN system where indigenous peoples and states come together on an equal basis and jointly try to, in a cohesive manner, effectively address the particular needs and concerns of indigenous peoples.

In this context, however, we must always remember that even though the Permanent Forum members are truly grateful to all indigenous representatives that come here to help us carry out our work, the vast majority of indigenous peoples - many of them women and children, who's particular vulnerable situation the Forum must continue to address - have no possibility to come to the United Nations and share with us their wisdom and experience. I believe that it is these peoples the Permanent Forum must always particularly consider, in all its activities.

I would also like to particularly stress that the Permanent Forum needs resources in order to operate. I therefore plead to the member states to be supportive towards the Permanent Forum in the discussions on the UN regularly budget. I further

extend my deepest gratitude to the states and UN system organizations that have contributed to the Voluntary Fund of the Permanent Forum, and call on states and others to continue to donate money to the Voluntary Fund.

My dear fellow colleagues in the Permanent Forum and in the Secretariat, my last words go to you. It has been an enormous pleasure to work with all of you to establish the Permanent Forum. I have been deeply impressed with the quality of the work you have all produced. On a personal level, I have come to fondly appreciate you as wonderful human beings. In less of a year, it will make me very sad no longer to be able to call you my colleagues. However, I am comforted by the fact that I will always be your friends.

[JOIK?]