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European Union

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
Fourth Session  
(Geneva, 11 – 15 July 2011)**

**Statement by  
by H.E. Ambassador Dimitris ILIOPOULOS  
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**on behalf of the European Union**

**Geneva, 11 July 2011**

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**EU Statement**

Mr/Ms Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

I am making this statement on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union is pleased to address the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These values are common to the European Union Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. These are the values that the EU is committed to upholding in its relations with the wider world.

Indigenous issues are an integral part of the European Union's external policy. The EU seeks to integrate human rights, including indigenous issues as well as rights of indigenous peoples, into all aspects of its external policies, including into its political dialogues with third countries and regional organisations, at multilateral forums such as the United Nations, and by giving financial support to civil society, including indigenous peoples' organisations.

The principles of the European Union's engagement towards indigenous peoples are applied in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of 2007, the adoption of which was supported by the European Union. The principles are there, now they must be translated into concrete action; therefore the full implementation of the Declaration all over the world is of utmost importance. The unprecedented opportunity created by the fact that the Declaration is now endorsed by the increasing number of States must not be missed. In this context, the European Union warmly welcomes the establishment of the UN Indigenous Peoples' Partnership (UNIPP), which we believe will play an indispensable role and seek to move the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples towards concrete change on the ground.

Indigenous issues are consistently mainstreamed in EU development cooperation strategies. In addition, the EU gives direct support to civil society organisations working on indigenous issues, in particular through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Since 1999, the rights of indigenous peoples have been included as a thematic priority under EIDHR. These projects aim at supporting indigenous organisations in ensuring their inclusion in policy-making processes. Main topics of the projects include empowerment, capacity-building and anti-discrimination. Among the beneficiaries, there are indigenous

organisations as well as an increasing number of mixed organizations, where part of the staff is indigenous. There is also a long-standing cooperation between the EU and OHCHR, as well as the ILO, to promote and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights from Headquarters. Several EU Delegations have also started local cooperation with UN bodies' projects targeting indigenous peoples, through the EIDHR's Country Based Support Scheme.

International cooperation is essential to advance the rights and situations of indigenous peoples. The EU is highly aware of this and as a result is providing substantial financial support to develop the economic, social and environmental potential of the Arctic regions of the EU and neighbouring areas. This is achieved through cross-border and transnational collaboration in the fields of innovation, business competitiveness, accessibility, education, research, natural resources and cultural heritage. For instance, the Arctic indigenous peoples from Russia, Norway, Sweden and Finland participate in the projects in the cross-border cooperation programme 'Kolarctic' under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

The European Union welcomes the fact that the Guiding Principles on business and Human Rights, recently endorsed by the Human Rights Council, make it explicit that in guidance to business enterprises with regard to respecting human rights, the specific challenges that may be faced by indigenous peoples should be taken into account, and that business enterprises should respect the human rights of individuals belonging to specific groups or populations that require particular attention, where they may have adverse human rights impacts on them. In this context, the European Union also looks forward to the results of the study that the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples is preparing on the impact of extractive industries on the rights and situations of indigenous peoples.

We welcome the successful completion of a study on indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making and commend the Expert Mechanism for pro-actively seeking views from relevant stakeholders, integrating different approaches and providing advice associated with the study. The European Union deems the topic of the study of great importance and looks forward to the debate during this session of the Expert Mechanism.

Thank you.