

Check against delivery

PFII, 13th session, 20 May 2014

Item Implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Intervention by Antti Korkeakivi, Chief, Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section, OHCHR

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples continues to be a key tool for action for the OHCHR. Our work both in the field and at headquarters aims to ensure that the articles of the Declaration are truly felt on the ground, and that we are consistently working in line with 42 of the Declaration, which, as you know, calls on UN organs to promote respect for and full application of the provisions of the Declaration and follow up its effectiveness.

This includes sharing promising practices and recognizing progress, but it is also equally important to denounce violations and point out shortcomings where they are detected. After all, there are all too many instances where the implementation of the standards of the Declaration has been, as it were, on hold for seven years since the adoption of the document, with a number of indigenous peoples denied their right to land, excluded from decision making and access to justice.

In addressing these serious challenges, the High Commissioner for Human Rights has an important role to play, and she has this year once again highlighted the concerns of indigenous peoples through her country visits, statements and other work, often with a particular focus on indigenous women. At the OHCHR, we have also continued to develop our indigenous fellowship programme and other capacity building work as well as support to the important work of key mandates such as the SR on Indigenous Peoples, EMRIP, human rights treaty bodies, HRC and its UPR as well as the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, all of which contribute to the implementation of the Declaration. You can find more details in our written report submitted to this session.

There is a strong commitment in OHCHR to maintain this focus on indigenous peoples' rights and the Declaration. Indeed, indigenous peoples' rights figure prominently in our new management plan, which covers the years 2014-2017, including in connection with our thematic priorities of enhancing equality and combatting discrimination as well as widening democratic space, which is also linked to indigenous peoples' participation in decision making.

In our efforts to advance indigenous peoples' rights, we do not work in isolation. After all, the road to true impact goes through cooperation and joint efforts. This means first of all, close partnership with indigenous peoples and States. But cooperation must also involve a number other actors with influence on human rights, and we have therefore aimed to expand the group of champions of the Declaration.

For example, we have worked with our partners to raise awareness amongst parliamentarians of the Declaration and we have also continued to prioritize our

engagement with national human rights institutions, aiming to build their capacity to pursue work on indigenous peoples' issues, including through a manual we issued earlier this year together with the Asia Pacific Forum. The Manual gives guidance and also presents good practices from different NHRIs to illustrate effective ways of implementing the Declaration.

It is also important that our partnership and engagement around indigenous issues involves international bodies with a wider human rights mandate. In this respect, the fact that the Voluntary Fund now has the mandate to support indigenous participation not only in the PF and EMRIP but also in human rights treaty bodies and in UPR is significant. As explained by Kenneth Deer, this is already having an impact, in terms of increasing visibility of indigenous peoples rights, for example, in the work of CERD and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I would like in this connection to highlight that there are also new treaty tools that have strong potential for indigenous peoples, including new complaint mechanisms under the CRC (introduced through an optional protocol, which entered into force just last month) and ICESCR (with an optional protocol that entered into force a year ago).

We also attach great importance to our cooperation with our UN partners, to building coalitions in which the Declaration is our shared tool. This includes notably the country level action pursued by UNIPP as well as the work of the UN IASG, of which OHCHR is the incoming chair.

This year, we have a number of major opportunities to make significant progress to advance the rights of indigenous peoples, ranging from the development of post 2015 development agenda to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. In these and other contexts, we look forward to working with all of you to make sure that the Declaration gets the attention it deserves, yielding real positive impact on the lives of indigenous peoples.

Thank you.