

17 June 2014

Statement at an interactive hearing to discuss the rights of Indigenous Peoples and their development priorities

The United Nations General Assembly is holding an interactive hearing on 17-18 June to discuss the rights of Indigenous Peoples and their development priorities, ahead of the first-ever World Conference on Indigenous Peoples to be convened in September.

Concerned about their plight, the General Assembly decided in 2010 to organize a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples to be held in 2014, in order to share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Preparations are now underway for the meeting, which will be held on 22-23 September. "Ensuring that the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples is a success and that its outcomes are meaningful will be crucial" underscored the Hearing's organizer, the President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly, John W. Ashe, during his opening statement.

The World Conference will be an opportunity for indigenous people to shine the spotlight on their specific challenges, as discussions are currently underway to define a new set of universal development goals, which will be adopted in 2015 to succeed the Millennium Development Goals.

The interactive hearing provides an inclusive platform for Member States and indigenous peoples to further their dialogue and exchange views on the Outcome Document to be adopted at the World Conference.

H.E. Andrej Logar, Permanent Representative of Slovenia underlined "the need to continue to develop an active partnership between Governments and Indigenous Peoples based on mutual respect and dignity."

Stressing the importance of the "full, effective and direct participation of Indigenous People" in this process, Mr. Rodion Sulyandziga, co-Chair of the Indigenous Global Coordinating Group noted that the focus should be on the actual implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Conference is expected to cut across many issues relevant to indigenous peoples, including the lack of full enjoyment of rights and legislative recognition, discrimination resulting in social stigma, difficulties in exercising their rights to self-governance and to land ownership, as well as access to justice, and the preservation of culture and language.

Ms. Soyata Maïga, Chairperson of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and Communities in Africa, described the many challenges faced by Indigenous People in Africa, adding that there is "immense hope placed in this world event".

The upcoming world event has indeed raised high expectations, as it is expected to produce an inaugural outcome document to help protect, promote, and implement the rights of indigenous peoples everywhere.

Statement attributable to the Spokesperson