



Remarks

by

H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

Informal interactive hearings as preparatory process for the High-level meeting of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

New York

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Excellencies,

Mr. Rodion Sulyandziga, Co-chair, Indigenous Global Coordinating Group,

Ms. Soyata Maïga, Chairperson of the Working Group on Indigenous

Populations/Communities in Africa,

Distinguished Tribal Leaders and Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to this Informal Interactive Hearing on the Organization of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. I am grateful for the participation of all stakeholders here today and I invite you to make this a very constructive and productive session.

At the outset, I would like to thank my Advisors, the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, H.E. Mr. Eduardo Ulibarri and the Permanent Representative of Slovenia, H.E. Mr. Andrej Logar, as well as the two indigenous representatives, Dr. Mira Cunningham and Mr. Les Malezer, all of whom will be actively engaged in conducting this hearing.

Distinguished Guests,

Our General Assembly has declared that Indigenous Peoples have faced a number of impediments to the full enjoyment of their rights and that States should support them in rectifying this situation. Specifically, in resolution 59/174, States are called to [quote] “take concerted positive steps to ensure respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, on the basis of equality and non-discrimination, and recognizing the value and diversity of their distinctive identities, cultures and social organization.” [end quote].

In a larger sense, we are all committed to this very same task and to ensuring that the priorities of indigenous peoples are duly recognized and reflected in our global development efforts, specifically in the crafting of the upcoming Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Ensuring that the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples is a success and that its outcomes are meaningful will be crucial. Through this Interactive Hearing, which builds upon our previous informal consultations held on 3 June, it is hoped that a number of priority issues will be identified for inclusion in a “zero” draft which my Advisors and I will put together for

further consideration. Today's hearing presents us with an opportunity to identify concrete inputs for the zero draft. I urge therefore to focus your attention on this important task so as to ensure that we have a set of practical and meaningful ideas.

Excellencies,

During the past few months, there have been a number of delays in the process of getting us to this point, so now it is vitally important that we proceed quickly, efficiently and smoothly. Against this backdrop, here's how I intend to proceed in the short time remaining.

My hope is that by the end of June, we will have a first or "zero" draft of the Outcome Document to present to all stakeholders for consideration. This will be followed by a day of consultations in mid-July to obtain comments. Based on comments received, a revised draft will be prepared and made available to all stakeholders by the end of July. A final day of consultations will then be held in mid-August to again allow for comments, on the basis of which a final draft will be prepared and made available for the consideration of member States by the end of August. Let me again stress that, in all phases of this exercise the Advisers will be fully involved.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the delays we have experienced in recent months, we are now set to begin one of the most important stages in the preparatory process, and I feel confident that we will be able to adhere to the proposed timeline, and ultimately have a concise outcome document that will reflect the concerns and aspirations of the indigenous peoples.

I look forward to your full participation over the next two days.

Thank you.
