



Remarks

By

**H.E. Mr. Crispin Gregoire
Special Advisor to the President**

On behalf of

**H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations
General Assembly**

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
“Bridging the gap: implementing the rights of indigenous peoples”

**New York
8 August 2014**

Please check against delivery.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Vice-Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,
Under-Secretary General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development,
Special Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the President of the General Assembly, I have the great honour to join the world community today in commemorating this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. This worthy tradition dates back to 1994 and was renewed by our Assembly of nations in resolution 59/174 as part of efforts to strengthen international cooperation to support indigenous people in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education and health.

With the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People coming to a close and the World Conference on Indigenous People's rapidly approaching, this year carries particular importance and significance.

Excellencies,

Two historic decades have passed since the Vienna Declaration and they have been an important testament to the struggles and achievements of indigenous peoples. The first decade saw a number of accomplishments, including: United Nations entities, Member States, and Indigenous Peoples' organizations working together to advance the rights of indigenous peoples; the establishment of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; the appointment by the Human Rights Commission of the Special Rapporteur; and demonstrated effectiveness by Indigenous Peoples to ensuring that indigenous issues are inserted into a number of international settings.

During the course of the Second Decade, we have witnessed the historic adoption by the General Assembly of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, continuous mobilization by Indigenous Peoples towards more effective articulation of their plight and challenges, as well as decisive steps by some governments and international organisations to accord greater attention to the rights and improved well-being of Indigenous Peoples.

As we observe this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, in the final and crucial year of this second decade, we hearken back to past achievements and prepare for the future action that is necessary to realize our commitments. This year's focus, "bridging the gap through implementing the rights of Indigenous Peoples" is an apt reminder that there is still a long way to go in the journey towards the concerted and decisive action required to address the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In this regard, it is not just the gap between the indigenous and the non-indigenous within countries that needs to be bridged at an accelerated pace, but the gap between the promise of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (A/Res/61/295) and the reality of its implementation. The first "World Conference on Indigenous Peoples" to be held on the 22nd and the 23rd of September this year marks an important milestone in our efforts.

In the preparation for the World Conference, the President is working closely with Indigenous Peoples and Member States to ensure that this seminal event will be a success. Along with his four Advisers, two from Member States and two from Indigenous Peoples, he is committed to ensuring that the World Conference brings about real and effective change for the benefit of all Indigenous Peoples. He is pleased to inform that the team is working hard on preparing a clear, concise and action-oriented outcome document that will hopefully serve as a robust platform for enhanced cooperation between Member States and Indigenous Peoples.

Distinguished Guests,

The historical marginalization of indigenous peoples is still an unfortunate reality in today's world and in many places, daunting obstacles are a part of daily life. As the preamble of the Alta Document so eloquently lays out, past injustices have led to current challenges. This preamble further reaffirms that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be the foundation of all our efforts moving forward. Yet, its value will remain severely limited if words are not followed up with deeds, and theories are not put into practice.

Through the three pillars of engagement – the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – the United Nations has undertaken important steps towards greater recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. What is required now is more decisive action at international and national levels to ensure the full implementation of the provisions of the Declaration.

Our commemoration today is both a prelude and a bridge to the World Conference. I hope that the Outcome Document we ultimately adopt this September will serve to consolidate the achievements of the past as well as stimulate efforts for the future.

On this International Day, let me salute the Indigenous Peoples of the world and express my fervent hope that the international community will work steadfastly with you towards the realization of your inalienable rights as enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. May this Day be both a reaffirmation of the international community's solidarity with you, as well as an important opportunity to lay the foundation for the Conference next month.

Thank you.
