



STATEMENT

BY

HER EXCELLENCY
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

ON AGENDA ITEM 65
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

20 OCTOBER 2014

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PERMANENT MISSION OF BELIZE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Madame Chair,

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on Agenda Item 65: Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you of CARICOM's full support and cooperation for the successful fulfillment of your mandate.

Madam Chair,

We thank the Secretary-General for his final report on the *"Achievement of the goals and objectives of the Second International decade of the World's Indigenous People"* which reiterates the fact that while there has been affirmative action taken in some areas to eliminate the root causes perpetuating discrimination against Indigenous peoples much more has to be done to ensure that Indigenous peoples collectively and individually, have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination and are allowed to fully and effectively participate in all matters that concern them.

The member states of CARICOM continue to reaffirm their commitment to and support for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in particular the core principle of non discrimination. We are proud to note that our region has a solid history of peaceful co-existence in our diverse multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies. We acknowledge the many contributions that our Indigenous and Tribal peoples, have and continue to make to the prosperity of our nations and stress that there is much the world can learn from the practices of Indigenous peoples in the promotion and sustainable use of biodiversity, ecosystem management, traditional sustainable agricultural practices, sustainable land use and conservation.

Madam Chair,

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues continues its excellent work in helping to define future action to be embarked on by the United Nations System, States, the international community, and Indigenous and Tribal peoples and in the promulgation of its mandate to discuss Indigenous issues related to social and economic development, culture, the environment, education health and human rights. We echo the call for continued support by states of the work of the Forum especially in the area of data collection and analysis in identified study areas.

The Countries of CARICOM have made important progress in ensuring that its Indigenous and Tribal peoples, as appropriate, have equal representation in governance and decision making in their material and cultural life both nationally and regionally. We respect and promote all traditional cultures and knowledge and take a cooperative and consultative approach when developing National plans, programmes and policies. And as we continue our elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda we recognize the continued need to ensure that we work in consultation and coordination with Indigenous peoples to identify, develop and provide resources to build on traditional and entrepreneurial practices to bring more economic activities to their societies. Our member states continue to inform on the progress of our analysis and review of existing national legislation, especially as they relate to Indigenous peoples justice and other representative institutions.

Madam Chair,

As states grapple with the task of ensuring that the gaps which keep the poorest in our societies marginalized are bridged, we also have to be continuously aware of the additional barrier of geographic isolation sometimes facing our Indigenous populations. We continue to improve access to quality healthcare and educational services in our Indigenous

communities by providing community based polyclinics in many of the remote Indigenous villages and working with our education partners to construct and manage schools as appropriate in the more remote Indigenous areas.

We welcome the adoption of the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, in September 2014, which signaled our continued support of the United Nations System in its continuing and important role of promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples. We affirm our commitment to ensuring the provision of economic and social programmes aimed at improving the well being of our Indigenous populations in particular, programmes aimed at empowering Indigenous women and youth.

CARICOM thanks the Secretary General for his Note and his transmission of the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the “Status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples.” We echo the calls for increased support from governments and donors to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous peoples and its expanded mandate. The work of the Fund has been instrumental in affording Indigenous communities and organizations the opportunity to participate, deliberate and contribute to discussions occurring not only within the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism but also allows for their participation in the Human Rights Council and World Conference on Indigenous peoples. The Fund continues to provide vital support to Indigenous representatives enabling them to be heard within the context of the UN System and internationally, in matters of most importance to them. As the Fund moves into its 30th year of existence, sustained and increasing support by governments will ensure that it continues to fulfill its vital mandate of allowing for the engagement of

Indigenous populations in deliberations on Indigenous issues taking place at the international level.

Madam Chair,

CARICOM continues its reaffirmation of the equality of all peoples and commits to continue to work to ensure that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are afforded to all the peoples of the region.

I thank you.