



General Assembly Third Committee  
20 October 2014  
Item 65 a & b:  
Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
Statement delivered by  
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Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations

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Madame Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Serbia\* and Albania\*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

The respect for human rights and equality are core principles of the European Union and its global action includes combating discrimination and exclusion. The EU strategic Framework and Action Plan on human rights and democracy, adopted in 2012, reiterates the EU commitment to the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly in the context of combating discrimination. The EU seeks to integrate human rights into all aspects of its external policies, and prioritizes the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples across the globe.

We reaffirm our support to the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which marked a significant milestone for all of us – member states and indigenous peoples. The Declaration remains an important instrument for promoting human rights.

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\* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

However, we would once again reiterate that the realization of the Declaration rests upon on the determination and continued commitment to the implementation of its objectives.

In this regard we would like to welcome the focus on action in the outcome document agreed just a month ago at the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held here in New York, with the participation of high-level representatives of the Member States as well as indigenous peoples across regions. We believe that this action oriented document serves as a useful guide for further action to make UNDRIP a reality, including through increased coherence of UN action through a system-wide action plan. We also welcome the commitments taken with regard to promoting the participation of indigenous peoples and further steps to promote the implementation of UNDRIP, making use of the existing UN mechanisms.

We would in particular underline the added value that the contributions and the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples brought to this document – we believe that we now have a document with broad ownership, which will be crucial when it comes to its implementation.

Madame Chair,

Indigenous peoples and individuals are often facing multiple forms of discrimination. Too many indigenous individuals find themselves discriminated because they are indigenous, but also because they are poor, female, because of their sexual orientation or their disability. We therefore reiterate our call to all partners among the UN member states and indigenous peoples to step up efforts to cooperate in combatting discrimination in all its forms.

We note that the Outcome Document also focuses on another area of grave concern to us - violence against indigenous women and children. We welcome the emphasis placed on the need to further tackle the causes and consequences of this violence.

We value the enormous contribution that the traditions and knowledge of indigenous peoples have made to the world's cultural heritage, but also pay tribute to defenders of indigenous peoples' rights, who are often exposed to particular risks and repression, as shown by a number of international reports, including those by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.

Madame Chair,

The EU is currently in the process of reviewing its policies on indigenous peoples so that they are coherent with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. The World Conference and its outcome document inform and feed into this review.

The EU has a wide range of policies that are relevant for indigenous peoples' rights - both for internal EU action as well as for its cooperation with third countries.

In the field of external EU action, the *European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy* specifically identifies the rights of indigenous peoples as set out in UNDRIP as being targets for this financing instrument for external cooperation. In the EU development cooperation, the support to indigenous peoples is defined as a crosscutting issue, while also being an objective in itself. Some of the EU funding mechanisms also specifically refer to organisations representing indigenous peoples as eligible beneficiaries. These policies can further promote our cooperation with the UN system, all Member States and indigenous peoples in our joint efforts to promote and protect indigenous peoples' rights.

In our efforts for the further implementation of our commitments with regard to promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, we emphasise the need for concrete tools and an overview of best practices to tackle the challenges we face efficiently and systematically. In this respect, we are pleased to see the growing number of initiatives where government agencies as well as indigenous peoples are working on developing guidance material and practical tools for informed decisions and actions. The EU is supporting a project by ILO in cooperation with IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs), AIPP (Asian Indigenous Peoples' Pact), Tebtebba Foundation and a number of local partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America in developing a monitoring Framework based on UNDRIP.

We also note the importance of indigenous issues and the engagement of indigenous peoples in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. Respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and the well-being of indigenous peoples are closely intertwined with the objectives of global sustainable development.

Madame Chair,

As the UN moves forward in its actions to support the rights of indigenous peoples, we will be doing our share in promoting the implementation of the outcome document. We believe that many of our policies can be stepped up and employed in a coherent and proactive manner. We look forward to working – in a concerted manner – with all actors within the UN family and the UN membership to achieve this goal.

Thank you.