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BRAZIL

Item 65 (a, b): Rights of indigenous peoples

Statement by

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Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN**

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Madam Chair,

Almost a month ago, we made history at the United Nations, as we held, on September 22nd and 23rd, the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, with broad and active participation of indigenous representatives.

The success of the World Conference is a sign of changing times in international politics. A time of more openness at the United Nations to civil society, non-governmental organizations, academia and a variety of stakeholders.

It is also a time, recalling the words of the Secretary-General, when indigenous representatives can be assured that they "will always have a home at the United Nations".

From the start, the Brazilian Government has endorsed the notion that indigenous peoples be given the opportunity to take part in the preparatory processes of the Conference and to contribute to the Outcome Document.

We expect that the report of the Secretary-General to the 70th session of the General Assembly on specific proposals to enable the participation of indigenous peoples and their institutions sheds light on how to grant inclusive and comprehensive representation, so as to benefit indigenous peoples from Tierra del Fuego to Kaffeklubben Island, and from Attu Island to Caroline Island.

We also expect that there will come a day, when the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples and their institutions in meetings of relevant United Nations bodies on issues affecting them will no longer be a matter for consideration and negotiation on a "ad hoc" basis.

Madam Chair,

Brazil has engaged constructively in the negotiation process of the Outcome Document of the World Conference by upholding the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples in Brazil and entering into a frank and direct dialogue with various indigenous representations, including the Global Coordination Group (GCG).

By the end of July, Brazil joined the Group of Friends of the Conference with a view to better understand the demands of the indigenous peoples worldwide and communicate them to Member-States at the United Nations and back to Brazil.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable work carried out by Ambassadors Crispin Gregoire, Andrej Logar, Eduardo Ulibarri and Marjon Kamara. Let me also congratulate Ms. Mirna Cunningham and Mr. Les Malezer - representatives of the indigenous peoples.

Madam Chair,

As the Minister of Justice of Brazil, Jozé Eduardo Cardozo, underscored, during the World Conference, the Brazilian Government is committed to

promoting and protecting the cultural diversity of indigenous peoples, in accordance with our commitment to the notion of equal opportunity to Brazilians of all origins.

Over eight hundred thousand Brazilians identify themselves as members of more than three hundred different indigenous peoples. They speak no less than two hundred and seventy different languages.

There are 688 indigenous territories in Brazil, encompassing an area of almost 1.1 million square kilometers. That amounts to more than 12% of the national territory. It is certainly the world's largest portion of acknowledged indigenous lands.

Brazil is increasingly engaged in promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 and subsequent legislation are consistent with the key provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as adopted in 2007.

The Brazilian Government has made every effort to enforce the rights of indigenous peoples in domestic legislation, policies and concrete initiatives.

In 2006, we established the National Commission for Indigenous Policies with a view to promoting full and active participation by indigenous peoples in the framing and implementation of public policies that concern them.

An Inter-Ministerial Working Group is currently drafting specific regulations to implement the provisions of the ILO Convention 169.

Brazil has established a National Healthcare Policy for Indigenous Peoples, which attributes special attention to the traditional knowledge, medicines and practices of indigenous peoples.

Our educational system is taking concrete steps to respect the cultural and linguistic diversity of indigenous peoples.

Notwithstanding the progress achieved, we are aware of the need to do more to ensure the full exercise of the rights of indigenous peoples.

This is true not only for Brazil, but for every region in the world.

Madam Chair,

We have learned, during the two days of the World Conference, that indigenous peoples around the world are faced with challenges of similar nature. Over the centuries, the human rights of indigenous peoples have been undermined by violence and discrimination; extreme poverty; unequal access to education and health services; social and economic inequality; disregard for indigenous culture, traditional knowledge, faith and languages; as dispossession of indigenous lands, territories and resources without provisions for redress and benefit sharing.

Our role as Member-States to the United Nations is to take action to change this state of affairs.

The Outcome Document of the World Conference will serve as a platform for ensuring that indigenous peoples be conferred their full rights, as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

That is why we have renewed, in the Outcome Document, our commitment to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against indigenous peoples and individuals, in particular, women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Brazil has supported specific paragraphs on the need to assess the causes and consequences of violence against indigenous women and girls; the need to empower indigenous women and indigenous youth; the value of health practices and the traditional medicine and knowledge of indigenous peoples; the need for equal access to physical and mental health; the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples in the benefits of their knowledge, innovations and practices; and, among other actions, the need to ensure equal access to high-quality education that recognizes the diversity of the culture of indigenous peoples and the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous persons with disabilities.

The Brazilian Government also acknowledges the need to consult and cooperate with the indigenous peoples in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent with regard to projects affecting their lands, territories and resources.

Madam Chair,

There is a growing consensus regarding the significance of the contribution of indigenous peoples to the promotion of sustainable development. It is clear that without the full exercise of indigenous rights, development will be unsustainable.

This is why Brazil sustains that the distinctive aspirations of indigenous peoples be mainstreamed in the national policies and strategies aimed at achieving all the goals established by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

As the Post-2015 Development Agenda will frame the future work of the United Nations for decades to come, we cannot afford to lose sight of the demands, needs and specific views of indigenous peoples.

Madam Chair,

Who would have imagined, a few decades ago, that indigenous representatives and Member-States would be sitting together in a negotiation room at the UN. Nonetheless, this is what has just happened. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the long road still ahead of us in advancing the rights of indigenous peoples.

Brazil is confident that indigenous peoples around the world can be granted a better life.

Thank you