



**General Assembly Third Committee
19 October 2015
Item 69:
Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Statement delivered by
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Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

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Mr Chairperson,

I have the pleasure of speaking 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 Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

It has been one year since the EU Member States - in unison with all other member states of the UN and together with representative of indigenous peoples - gathered for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. We reaffirm today our support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

In this respect we thank the Secretary-General on his highly useful report on the Progress made in the implementation of the Outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

The EU is pleased to note the many efforts made at national levels as well as at regional and international levels to implement the recommendations of the Outcome document.

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

Looking at the international level, we are particularly pleased with the rapid progress achieved in relation to the review of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) and we welcome the request of the 30th Session of the Human Rights Council to convene an expert workshop with the participation of states and indigenous peoples as well as other stakeholders to discuss this review. The EU believes that the options for strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of a revised mandate of EMRIP are well presented in the aforementioned report of the Secretary-General.

For the EU, the objectives of our contributions to this review would be twofold:

Contribute to strengthening the complementarity, with and between not only the two other indigenous mechanisms (The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) but also with all the other mechanisms and mandates of the Human Rights Council.

Ensure that working methods of a revised Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will have real impact at national levels.

At this session of the General Assembly we are also going to discuss the proposals of the Secretary-General to enable the participation at the United Nations of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives on the issues affecting them. We agree with the observations of the Secretary-General that we do have a number of good practices in this regard. It is important to apply these practices- as we discuss the proposals of the Secretary General and agree upon concrete measures to enable the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples' representatives and institutions through representatives chosen by them, at the United Nations in matters affecting them.

In moving the discussions forward we note the suggestion by the Secretary-General that the President of the General Assembly may consider leading an open-ended consultation process on the possible procedural and institutional steps and selection criteria necessary to enable the participation of indigenous peoples at the UN.

For many years the European Union has paid particular attention to the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples across the globe. As a way of improving our work, the EU has launched a review aiming at strengthening relevant EU Policies to ensure their coherence with the Declaration and the WCIP outcome document. Through two separate consultation events with Indigenous Peoples, one held in March 2015 in Brussels and the second held in conjunction with the 14th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, indigenous peoples have informed the EU on the priorities for a strengthened EU policy. At the two consultations, Indigenous Peoples' representatives and experts expressed "full acknowledgement of the existing EU policy commitments to respecting Indigenous Peoples' rights"; while also making a number of pertinent recommendations.

These recommendations confirm the relevance of our continuing policy of raising the human rights' situation of Indigenous Peoples in the high level human rights dialogues we have with our partner countries as well as in providing financial support through numerous programmes. A lot of EU support programmes address the legal-institutional frameworks and access to justice while aiming at the enforcement of social, economic and cultural rights - often with the specific focus on land and environmental issues. A particular attention is also given to Indigenous Human Rights Defenders or civil society representatives defending Indigenous Peoples. The commitment to support human rights defenders working on economic, social and cultural rights is also reinforced in the newly adopted EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy that will run until 2019.

The new EU Action Plan for Human Rights has an overall strengthened focus on the human rights that are most heavily affected by an increasingly globalised production, trading and business environment, while not compromising the premises that all human rights are indivisible and interdependent. In this context we thank the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz for her report. The EU looks forward to following her work in this field.

Mr Chairperson, in closing, let me assure you once again of EUs continued support in the work of the UN and its Member States to work for the effective realisation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the concrete recommendations of the WCIP Outcome document.

Thank you.