

**UNGA 70: Agenda Item 69(a-b), Rights of Indigenous Peoples**  
**U.S. Statement, delivered by Laurie Phipps, Adviser**  
**Monday, October 19, 2015**

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States thanks the Secretary-General for his report on follow-up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. We support creating a System-Wide Action Plan (“SWAP” or “Plan”) to guide UN agencies in fulfilling the goals of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The SWAP would encourage agencies which have not focused adequately on indigenous peoples’ concerns in the past to do so in the future. Furthermore, the Plan would help them do this in the most efficient way. We suggest that the Plan have agencies consider their comparative strengths and consult to eliminate duplication in activities, thus assuring a coherent approach among agencies. We also recommend that after organizations formulate recommendations on activities that can meet indigenous peoples’ needs, they should put these proposals before the relevant governing boards for consideration and endorsement. These measures will result in a unified approach within agencies. As attempts to create an overly complex document may delay its completion, we recommend that the SWAP be crafted with a relatively small number of clear, broad objectives that each agency can apply to its responsibilities.

The United States encourages further progress on enhancing indigenous peoples’ participation at the UN. Enhanced participation is critical to empowering indigenous peoples, as it would enable them to have their concerns considered and acted upon more effectively within the UN system. It also would inform the debate within the UN by allowing a greater range of relevant views to be heard by those who are critical stakeholders. The Secretary-General’s report recommends that the President of the General Assembly appoint co-facilitators for an open-ended consultation process among member states, indigenous peoples, and UN representatives on the enhanced participation question. The United States recommends that the substantive part of these consultations take place in ECOSOC rather than the General Assembly. We think it is important to base the consultations in ECOSOC to make them as inclusive and participatory as possible. ECOSOC allows for discussion among the UN and other actors in addition to member states, whereas General Assembly consultations are limited to member states. Proceeding in this way is also consistent with paragraph 40 of the WCIP outcome document, which requests the Secretary-General to submit to the fall 2015 General Assembly, “... through the Economic and Social Council, ... specific proposals to enable the participation of indigenous peoples’ representatives and institutions ... .” Rather than an open-ended process, a process lasting for a few months would serve to focus the discussion.

Accordingly, the United States would recommend a Chair’s text in Third Committee for a procedural resolution taking note of the Secretary-General’s report; giving guidance for the System-Wide Action Plan; and requesting ECOSOC to follow up on the World Conference outcome document’s recommendations on enhanced participation. This Chair’s text could pave the way for the President of ECOSOC to take appropriate action, such as scheduling debate on the Secretary-General’s report and beginning a process of negotiating a follow-up resolution on enhanced participation of indigenous peoples.

We welcome the progress made at the September Human Rights Council session on reviewing EMRIP's mandate and composition. The United States sees merit in having an existing UN body partner with countries on a voluntary basis to assess how they have attained, or may better attain, the Declaration's goals. EMRIP is a good candidate to take on this important task. As there is overlap between the annual PFII and EMRIP programs of work, with the PFII covering a greater range of topics, EMRIP's functions should be updated to reduce duplication and conference services costs. The HRC resolution is significant because it defines the modalities for discussing EMRIP reform, laying out a timetable for completing specific actions. The resolution calls for an expert workshop in early 2016 to formulate recommendations on the subject and a report that includes those recommendations. It invites stakeholders to consider the report at the summer 2016 EMRIP session and for states to consider intergovernmental follow-up action, and keeps the topic of EMRIP reform on the September 2016 HRC agenda. Importantly, the text affirms indigenous peoples' full and effective participation in this process and invites member states to hold consultations with indigenous peoples in their territories. The United States plans to hold at least one consultation with U.S. indigenous representatives before the expert workshop to hear their views on revitalizing EMRIP. Over the next year, those actions should lead to substantive discussion on how EMRIP's mandate and composition should be adjusted, followed by consensus action at the HRC.

Thank you for your attention. We encourage this Committee and other parts of the UN system to build on the momentum from the World Conference to continue efforts on the System-Wide Action Plan, EMRIP revitalization, and enhanced participation for indigenous peoples at the UN. We look forward to working with all stakeholders on these efforts, both in Geneva to achieve EMRIP reform and New York to secure enhanced participation for indigenous peoples.