

STATEMENT

16th Session on the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues



International
Labour Office

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STATEMENT BY

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Item 8: Discussion on the theme “Tenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: measures taken to implement the Declaration”.

Chair, Excellencies, Members of the Forum, Distinguished Delegates,

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is pleased to participate in the 16th Session of the United Nations Forum on Indigenous Issues. The ILO values highly engaging with the Forum, and we congratulate the Chair and the new members on their appointment.

As you are aware, the ILO is the UN’s specialized agency with the mandate to promote decent work and social justice for all. The ILO is a tripartite organization, bringing together governments, and workers’ and employers’ organizations from its 187 member States.

The ILO hosts Convention No. 169, the UN system’s treaty dedicated to indigenous and tribal peoples’ rights. The [ILO strategy for action concerning indigenous and tribal peoples](#), endorsed by the ILO Governing Body in 2015, seeks to promote the rights of the peoples concerned in the context of inclusive and sustainable development.

The special theme of the session is the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration). The ILO is delighted to join the celebration of this historic achievement.

The anniversary comes at a crucial moment when efforts to roll out the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change are expected to gain momentum.

The Declaration’s anniversary is therefore a crucial time for reflection on how indigenous and tribal peoples’ rights, aspirations and contributions can become an integral part of national development strategies and plans. From the ILO’s perspective ensuring indigenous peoples’ equal access to training and education, employment, decent working conditions, social protection and support for sustainable enterprises is of strategic importance in this regard.

The Declaration, an unprecedented expression of global commitment, has contributed to increasing awareness and visibility of indigenous peoples and their concerns at the international, regional and national levels. It has empowered indigenous peoples to claim their rights and the new global agendas on development and climate change specifically acknowledge indigenous peoples. The Declaration also helped to increase attention to the discrimination and exclusion faced by indigenous women and persons with disabilities.

We are also eager to report that since the Declaration's adoption, three additional countries have ratified the Convention No. 169 – namely Spain, Nepal and Nicaragua – and the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples has encouraged its further ratification. Ratification and effective application of the Convention is indeed an important course of action for achieving the objectives of the Declaration.

Chair,

While there are thus encouraging developments, the real test of success will be whether our efforts to promote the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples translate into tangible improvements in the daily lives of the over 370 million indigenous women and men across all regions of the globe. And for this to occur, there is an urgent need for stepping up support all stakeholders concerned at the national level, particularly through building capacity and accompanying dialogue among them towards shared understandings that can successfully underpin progress over the years ahead.

While the challenges ahead are many, let me highlight two of them based on recent ILO studies and assessments:

1. There are persisting gaps regarding the recognition of indigenous and tribal communities as distinct peoples with their own cultures, traditions, institutions and ways of live, and a lack of acknowledgement of their role as actors and agents of change for the national development process. A [new ILO report on the rights of indigenous peoples in Asia](#), prepared with indigenous partners, finds that a range of countries in the region already refer to indigenous and tribal peoples in their development policies and makes a set of recommendations on how to strengthen the existing approaches and on addressing the gaps.
2. The [ILO supervisory bodies](#) – these include the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application on Conventions and Recommendations, the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference Committee on the Application of Standards - continue to insist on the need in several countries to put in place the required mechanisms and measures to ensure consultations with the representative institutions of indigenous and tribal peoples with regard to legislative and administrative measures that may affect them directly, through appropriate procedures, and with the objective of reaching agreement or consent. This is a matter of concern as such circumstances impede the participation of indigenous peoples and undermine social peace and sustainable development.

In line with our strategy for action, the ILO is currently stepping up its efforts to support countries that have ratified Convention No. 169 with a view to achieving its full application. The efforts include capacity building for governments, indigenous peoples, employers' and workers' organizations, and the judiciary. We look forward to further strengthening collaboration with our sister UN agencies in order to ensure coherence, synergies and coordination in our work in support of making the rights set out in the Convention and the Declaration a reality.