



STATEMENT DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF AGENDA ITEM 69 (a,b.) ENTITLED:
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
74th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 11 October 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you Mr. President,

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples. Together, we are 20 States from different regions of the world.

The Group is comprised by: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Spain, Paraguay, Peru, and my own country, Mexico.

The Group of Friends welcomes this General Debate, as it represents an opportunity to exchange views and experiences on the advancement of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

12 years have past since the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Important and positive efforts and steps have been taken to implement the Declaration, and translate its words into actions and measures to recognize and advance the rights of indigenous peoples.

Yet, much still remains to be done for, and in partnership with, the world's estimated 370 million indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples around the world continue to face specific vulnerabilities, marginalization, and discrimination.

We must overturn those situations and practices. We must uproot exclusion, stigmatization, poverty, and injustice. We must truly leave no one behind.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is about *People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership*. Indigenous Peoples have much to

contribute, and play a key role in the achievement of its goals. In this collective endeavour, their voices must be heard; their knowledge must be harnessed; and their contributions must be taken into account.

Mr. President,

We are 2 months away from the conclusion of the International Year on Indigenous Languages.

It has been a productive year. Attention has been placed on the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages.

We commend the important work carried out by UNESCO, as the lead agency for the organization of the International Year, as well as the work of the Steering Committee.

Thanks to the awareness raised, it is evident that much still remains to be done, and sustained efforts beyond 2019 must be made to address the challenge.

Languages are disappearing around the world at an alarming rate. We lose one language every two weeks.

Considering this rapid rate, and the fact that the revitalization of indigenous languages requires a sustained effort by all actors, we urge all States to support the initiative to proclaim 2022-2032 as the “International Decade on Indigenous Languages”.

Mr. President

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that Indigenous Peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies.

An important component of the exercise of this right is the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains.

In this regard, we encourage the development of a process to facilitate the international repatriation of indigenous peoples' sacred items and human remains through the continued engagement with relevant UN agencies and stakeholders.

Mr. President

Just three weeks ago, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution encouraging the expansion of the mandate of the *UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples* to further support the participation of indigenous peoples, including indigenous women, youth and persons with disabilities, in United Nations business and human rights and climate change processes. We support this expansion.

We recognise the *UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples* as a valuable instrument to assist in the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings concerning them.

The Group of Friends takes this opportunity to commend the work and the efforts carried by out different UN agencies, bodies, funds, mechanisms, and stakeholders engaged in the advancement of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Mr. President.

The Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples is convinced that we can make important strides forward in these areas.

With this in mind, we renew our call to achieve the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and we will engage constructively on this item in the context of the Third Committee.

Thank you.