

International Indian Treaty Council



2940 16th Street, Suite 305,
San Francisco, CA 94103-3664
Telephone: (415) 641-4482; Fax: (415) 641-1298
www.iitc.org



High-Level Event of the General Assembly “The Contributions of Women, the Young and Civil Society to the Post-2015 Development Agenda,” 6-7 of March, 2014

7 March, Morning Panel Theme: Closing the inequality gap: efforts for addressing inequalities and meeting new and emerging global challenges for the eradication of poverty through the meaningful contributions of women, the young and civil society in the post-2015 development agenda

Presented by Roberto Múkaro Borrero (Taino), International Indian Treaty Council, on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group to the OWG

Honorable Chair, Mrs. Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland, distinguished Moderator, Ms. Pamela Falk, H.E. Mrs. Ana Trišić Babić, distinguished panelists, excellences, and friends.

Taimautia guaitiao (Good morning friends//relatives).

I begin by acknowledging the Indigenous Peoples of this land and whose descendants have welcomed us here many times to this place the Hopi People recognize, through prophecy, as the House of Mica.

I thank his H.E. John Ashe, President of the General Assembly, for inviting me to be a part of the panel this morning.¹ In addition, I also thank President Ashe and his staff for the well-presented background paper for this High Level event. The Indigenous Peoples Major Group to the OWG feels it sets a constructive context for participatory dialogue.

Equality, inclusiveness, consent and participation – these are central themes permeating generations of Indigenous Peoples’ human rights advocacy at the local, national, regional, and international levels. From the perspective of Indigenous Peoples, discussions on closing the inequality gap must begin with an honest assessment of the causes and impacts of historic injustices, including colonization, dispossession of lands, territories and resources, as well as oppression and discrimination perpetrated against indigenous Peoples.²

¹ I also extend my gratitude to my colleagues Galina Angarova of Tebtebba Foundation, Lucy Mulenki of Indigenous Information Network, and Andrea Carmen of the International Indian Treaty Council for their support and assistance in the preparation of this presentation today.

² Tauli-Corpuz, Victoria. *Indigenous Peoples and the Millennium Development Goals*, Indigenous Perspectives, Volume VII, Number 1, 2005. p. 12

Indeed, the PGA's background paper highlighted the need to move beyond addressing the symptoms to addressing the root causes of inequalities.³ For Indigenous Peoples, inequality and poverty are driven by structural, socio-economic and political factors. In essence, there is a need to rethink past approaches that have dominated the discourse thus far.

At this time I would like to bring to your attention a "The World We Want" initiative coordinated by UNICEF and the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples. A global e-discussion on *Indigenous Peoples and inequality* was co-convened over three-weeks in 2012 aimed at capturing diverse voices and contributions of Indigenous Peoples from around the world.⁴ I will share the seven priorities emerging from this innovative exercise, as I feel they link to some of the questions posed by the PGA's background paper.

1. Recognition of Indigenous Peoples at national and international levels;
2. Recognition of Indigenous Peoples' collective rights, in particular the right to land, territories and natural resources;
3. Enactment of intercultural and culturally-respectful policies at the national level, especially in the areas of education and health;
4. Prioritization of the special conditions and needs of Indigenous women, children, youth and indigenous persons with disabilities;
5. Recognition of culture as the 4th pillar of sustainable development, and the inclusion of the Indigenous view of development with culture and identity;
6. Enactment of the right to free, prior and informed consent in all matters affecting Indigenous Peoples;
7. Establishment of partnerships for development issues relating to Indigenous Peoples.

These priorities on inequalities are consistent with three core elements and priorities for Sustainable Development identified in the *Rio + 20 Indigenous Peoples International Declaration on Sustainable Development and Self-Determination*.⁵ These include:

- 1) Culture as a fundamental dimension of Sustainable Development;
- 2) Full exercise of the human and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples; and
- 3) Strengthening diverse local economies and territorial management

There are recurring, cross-cutting themes within both these inter-related sets of priorities to better address the gaps and highlight some of the particular inequalities faced by Indigenous Peoples. There include, inter-alia, the non-recognition of their collective land and resource rights and unequal access

³ Access to the PGA background paper available at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/settingthestage/2wycs.shtml>

⁴ Review the full summary of the e-discussion, as well as weekly summaries at <http://undesadspd.org/IndigenousPeoples/Post2015Agenda/EdiscussiononIndigenousPeoplesandInequality.aspx>

⁵ See <http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/content/220-indigenous-peoples-release-rio-20-declaration>

to public services. These impair Indigenous Peoples' ability to access and control ancestral lands, forests, waters and other natural resources, which are important for their subsistence, as well as their cultural and spiritual well being.⁶ Without access, Indigenous Peoples often remain poor and marginalized.⁷ As a result, many young men and women migrate to cities to look for employment where they experience further discrimination and risks including sexual abuse, trafficking, hazardous child labour, and general exploitation. Indigenous women and girls face double and triple discrimination because of their sex, being indigenous and many times because they are young.⁸

Regrettably these inequalities exist despite a legal framework that recognizes indigenous peoples' right to enjoy the full range of human rights and equal opportunities. This framework includes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), ILO Convention No. 169, the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination—ICERD, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women—CEDAW and other frameworks at the national and regional levels. Stronger engagement between Indigenous Peoples and States is required in order to allow the UNDRIP and other frameworks to effectively address critical realities and impacts of political, social, economic and cultural inequalities.

Let me conclude by offering a few of the recommendations that Indigenous Peoples put forth in “The World We Want” global e-discussion on *Indigenous Peoples and inequality*.

1. The implementation of a human rights-based approach to development should take into account issues of equality and sustainability, and endorse the fundamental concept of development with culture and identity.
2. The UN system should reach out and engage in meaningful partnerships with indigenous peoples to ensure their effective participation in the post-2015 development agenda and any emerging sustainable development goals. The inputs should be guided by the principles of equality and non-discrimination and include voices from indigenous women, youth and children and persons with disabilities. I would also include indigenous elders or older persons.
3. Partnerships at all levels should increase efforts to support and build on indigenous peoples' articulation of their own path for development, and should make every effort to provide adequate funding, technical and institutional support and training to assist those development efforts.

⁶ Lucy Mulenki Statement to OWG 8th Session

⁷ See also *Inequalities faced by indigenous peoples*, Inequality Matters, Report of the World Social Situation 2013, United Nations, New York. ST/ESA/345, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. pp. 89-93

⁸ See High-Level Event of the General Assembly “The Contributions of Women, the Young and Civil Society to the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, Submission by the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 26 February 2014

4. At the local and national levels, there is a need to strengthen the institutionalized mechanisms for consultation and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples, building on the fundamental principles of free, prior and informed consent and full participation in the development process. The role of the United Nations Country Teams in that respect is crucial. Especially in cities and countries where indigenous peoples have weak institutional capacity, the Country Teams should proactively engage in dialogue with indigenous representatives, both men and women.

5. The collection of disaggregated data by gender, age, ethnic identity and other factors, e.g. disability, is necessary in order to gain an accurate understanding of indigenous peoples' poverty, to qualify policies, and to develop appropriate programmes and monitor impact on all members of indigenous communities.

In closing, there are a number of other excellent recommendations contained in the online summary of the e-discussion on Indigenous Peoples and inequalities that would be useful for this and future debates. An additional source of recommendations to consider, specifically on Indigenous Women and Youth, can be found in the 26 February Submission by the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to the High-Level Event of the General Assembly "The Contributions of Women, the Young and Civil Society to the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Thank you.