



**DRAFT STATEMENT FOR THE CONSULTATIONS ON INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES PARTICIPATION IN RELEVANT MEETINGS OF THE UNITED
NATIONS ON ISSUES AFFECTING THEM**

New York, 11 May, 2016
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President:

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples, composed of Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Spain, Paraguay, Peru, and my own country, Mexico.

The Group of Friends welcomes this opportunity to engage with you alongside indigenous peoples. We would like to recognize especially the work done by the advisors to the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Kai Saur of Finland, Ambassador Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee of Ghana, Dr. Claire Charters of New Zealand and Dr. James Anaya of the United States of America.

The Group of Friends would like to emphasize the significant value that its members place on the direct engagement of indigenous peoples in the process. Accordingly, we recognize that the electronic consultations that were launched in previous months have asked indigenous peoples representatives and institutions to address specific ways on how they envision their participation in the United Nations.

Our countries are enriched by a diversity of indigenous peoples' groups, institutions and mechanisms for domestic engagement. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the variety of national circumstances and capabilities. In some cases, they include reduced internet access, limited access to remote areas, linguistic limitations, and a need for greater knowledge about the United Nation's mechanisms.

Therefore, we strongly welcome the openness expressed by the advisors to continue receiving inputs beyond the dates established for compilations. In this light, we strongly urge Member States, indigenous peoples, civil society and the UN Secretariat to redouble efforts so that the greatest possible number of indigenous peoples can have their views represented in this process.

Turning to this first compilation of views expressed, the Group of Friends notes the wide variety and extent of engagement that indigenous peoples propose. We would like to briefly outline some general principles that we intend to guide our considerations going forward.

We firmly believe that indigenous peoples are not non-governmental organizations and therefore should not be treated as such for determining participation in relevant UN bodies. The best way to ensure meaningful participation is through the creation of a new category of participation that is tailored to meet the realities and capacities of the organization, while advancing the presence and voice of indigenous peoples. We welcome further consultations on this proposal.

In regards to the forms of participation, we are ready to listen to indigenous peoples and exchange views. For participation to be meaningful, part of the discussion should include the principle of “differentiated participation” in the corresponding fora. While some United Nations meetings may allow for indigenous peoples to speak, others may have to be limited to written statements. In any case, the Group of Friends firmly believes that a voice should exist in some places where it currently does not and where the opinions of indigenous peoples will be a unique and valuable input to the work of the United Nations.

Our members place the utmost importance on the matter of selection criteria. We agree that the principle of self-identification is a main criterion in determining representation and eventual accreditation, among others.

We also believe that Indigenous Peoples' right to participate in decision-making, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures in accordance with article 18 of UNDRIP must be respected.

Furthermore, we believe that the process of accreditation should be carried out by institutions that fully incorporate indigenous peoples' representatives.

As the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples, we are pleased to note that positive precedents exist in various UN bodies and processes that have allowed for effective participation of indigenous peoples. Our intention going forward is to highlight those as best practices.

We encourage all indigenous peoples' representatives to bear in mind the importance of fully seizing the opportunity for dialogue in the context of the Permanent Forum and beyond. We cannot allow these consultations to result in a set of aspirational desires that help neither Member States nor indigenous peoples. The Group of Friends will strive to propose mutually beneficial and practicable ideas.

Mr. President:

Today, the Group of Friends welcomes the indigenous peoples' representatives to the United Nations and stands ready to listen and engage with them throughout this process. We reaffirm our appreciation for the work being carried out by the four advisors and hope to continue in this role during the coming months.