

Advocacy Report

Meeting attended:

The 16th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
United Nations, New York, 24 April - 5 May 2017

Attended by Maureen Byrne, Ph.D., New York United Nations Representative

Subject of meeting:

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly. The forum aimed to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. The 16th session focused on indigenous youth and the empowerment of indigenous women.

Refers to SDG no #: (please reference)

SDG #2, 3, 4, 5 16

Relevant treaties/conventions/resolutions:

United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly (17/9/07).

Session Highlights

Duga Prasad Bhattarai, Vice President of the UN General Assembly, underscored that much more needs to be done to fully realize the human rights of Indigenous Peoples and referenced the importance of the *2030 Agenda*, the *Paris Agreement on Climate Change*, and the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*.

Lenni Montiel, the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, stated that Indigenous Peoples continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty, discrimination, and poor health care. To address these ongoing concerns, the UN, at the request of member states, has increased engagement of the UN system through the International Labor Organization (ILO), UN Development Program (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

Special Rapporteur Report

General Comments:

Many states continue to have difficulty operationalizing the Declaration.

Many Indigenous Peoples continue to suffer gross human rights violations in terms of their land, their resources, and violence perpetrated against them.

Progress is challenged by weak implementation. Even when court cases are won, implementation often takes decades to happen.

Violations against Indigenous Peoples continue to occur on every continent in the areas of consent, natural resources extraction, displacement, and involuntary isolation. Of the 70 governments contacted, 30+ have communicated with her; she remains encouraged but concerned.

Banks and corporations are not being called to task – they need to invest in socially responsible policies. This is a problem on both a national and multi-national level.

USA chose not to attend the Inter-American Human Rights Commission – the first country to do so in 15 years.

States need to identify and confront obstacles to implementation of the Declaration. It is time that nations, the UN, and Indigenous Peoples join hands to obtain a just and sustainable world.

Comments on Specific Countries

Chile: Tripled national budget for Indigenous Peoples; integrate Indigenous Peoples health concerns into medical care; increase bilingual education; promote training for Indigenous women who are seen as pillars of economic and social cohesions.

Philippines: Government not protecting environment and natural resources; lack of data on social and economic well-being; threat of consistent assimilation.

Australia (Sp. Rapporteur report): Indigenous Peoples make up 3% of population while 27% of prison population; boys as young as 12 years are being incarcerated under horrific conditions; serious abuses occurring in foster care; high rates of violence against women and girls continues; need to close the gap in health and education.

United States (Impending Report by Special Rapporteur 9/17): Often consult with Indigenous Peoples but do not seek approval; conflicts over natural resources and energy development; disregard of treaties; militarized use of force by local officials; high rate of suicide and substance abuse in Indigenous Peoples communities; need to ensure tribal governments are implementing laws to protect women.

Educational Take Away for GWI:

- Recognize, advocate, and affect policy in terms of integrating Indigenous Peoples language into education (bilingual education).
- Advocate for integration of Indigenous Peoples' culture, traditional oral stories, and literature into the school curriculum.
- Aid Indigenous Peoples in recording their history, culture, and traditions for future generations.
- Identify obstacles that prevent Indigenous girls from attending school.