



Secretary-General

SG/SM/11524
HR/4945

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

SECRETARY-GENERAL, IN VIDEO MESSAGE, SAYS INDIGENOUS PERMANENT FORUM ASSUMES NEW ROLE

IN TRANSLATING DECLARATION ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS INTO 'LIVING' TEXT

Following is the text of a video message by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the seventh session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues today, 21 April, in New York:

This session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues meets at a historic crossroads. With the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Permanent Forum takes on a new role. You will work to translate the Declaration into a living document at the national and international levels. As you do, you will promote the United Nations development agenda and its vision of development for all. This includes the poorest and most vulnerable, a group to which many indigenous peoples belong.

I applaud your choice of climate change as the special theme of this session. Indigenous peoples live in many of the world's most biologically diverse areas. As custodians of these lands, they have accumulated deep, first-hand knowledge about the impacts of environmental degradation, including climate change. They know the economic and social consequences, and they can and should play a role in the global response.

I also welcome your focus on the Pacific for this session. This will spur greater cooperation and solidarity among Governments, indigenous peoples and the United Nations family in this important region.

And you meet in the International Year of Languages. Appropriately, the Forum is paying close attention to this issue. Indigenous languages represent an overwhelming majority of all languages spoken today, with most facing the threat of extinction. By protecting and promoting indigenous languages, we advance the dignity and human rights of indigenous people, and preserve the cultural diversity of all humankind.

I look forward to the Forum's recommendations on all these important fronts, and wish you a most successful session.

Thank you very much.