

Opening remarks by

H. E. Ambassador Cristián Barros Melet (Chile)

Vice President of the Economic and Social Council

at the

Sixteenth session of the

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

General Assembly Hall

United Nations Headquarters, New York

11a.m., 24 April 2017

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues,

Distinguished representatives of Member States, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations,

Distinguished representatives of the UN system and intergovernmental organizations,

Distinguished Elders,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to address the opening of the 16th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

As an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Permanent Forum has an essential role in providing expert advice and recommendations to the Council on indigenous issues. This year, we mark the 10th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The role of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is essential as we consider the progress made and where increased efforts are needed.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted on 25 September 2015, is a universal, transformative and people-centered plan to achieve sustainable development by 2030 – with the promise to leave no one behind. There are specific references to indigenous peoples in the 2030 Agenda.

2016 marked the first year of bringing the visions of the 2030 Agenda into action. At the High Level Political Forum for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in July last year, we noted that some of the voluntary national reviews emphasised indigenous peoples as one of the groups that are at risk of being left behind. Indigenous peoples participated at the High Level Political Forum as well as at regional and national levels, to remind us of our commitment to leave no one behind. As we celebrate ten years of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this carries greater resonance, as guidance on how to include the rights of indigenous peoples as we implement the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda also gives the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues a new and important responsibility. The Permanent Forum has provided substantive inputs

to the process leading to the 2030 Agenda as well as at the 2016 High Level Political Forum, emphasising indigenous peoples' issues, concerns and suggestions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This year, we also look forward to the contributions of the Permanent Forum to the High Level Political Forum as we implement the Agenda.

I would like to encourage indigenous peoples to continue their engagement in the 2030 Agenda and Member States to work with indigenous peoples, as they have extremely valuable contributions to make. The 2030 Agenda calls on indigenous voices in the national level reviews of the implementation of the Agenda (paragraph 79) and it encourages indigenous peoples as part of “we the peoples” to get involved in realising the Agenda (paragraph 52).

I note the efforts of the Permanent Forum to raise awareness on indigenous peoples in the work on other ECOSOC bodies. The 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March this year considered the “Empowerment of Indigenous Women” as a focus area, as a follow up to the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, as well as recommendations made by the Permanent Forum. I would like to encourage the Forum to continue to engage with other ECOSOC bodies to address the diverse challenges that indigenous peoples face in multiple spheres - and to promote a more coherent and coordinated approach by the United Nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You have two weeks ahead of you with a full agenda for important and timely discussions on a range of issues. The recommendations emerging from these discussions will be particularly relevant to ensure that the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are advanced in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in order not to leave indigenous peoples behind.

We look forward to the continued advice and guidance of the Permanent Forum in making indigenous issues an integral part of our work at the United Nations.

Thank you