

**UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES  
CHAIRPERSON**

**Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim**

**CLOSING OF THE TWENTY-THIRD SESSION**

**New York, 26 April 2024**

Distinguished delegations,  
Brothers and sisters of the Indigenous Peoples,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

We have reached the final part of the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Permanent Forum and I would like to start by thanking all of you for your participation, your contributions, and your efforts all along the session.

Our forum is the space of the Indigenous Peoples in our shared home, the United Nations. And once again I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the trust of electing me chair of the Permanent Forum.

I share with all of you the sense of urgency. While thanks to my predecessor, and to all forum members, great progress has been achieved over the last 20 years, Indigenous Peoples still face an existential threat.

If our planet continues to burn, if climate change is not stopped, if ecosystems are not protected, if our rights are not respected, in a lot of countries, we could literally be the last generation of Indigenous Peoples.

We will not let this happen. We will fight back, and I know that I can count on all of you.

Let me start by reflecting on what we have achieved in these two hectic weeks.

The annual Permanent Forum session started with high-level speakers including His Excellency DENNIS FRANCIS, President of the 78th session of the General Assembly, His Excellency DAVID CHOQUEHUANCA, Vice President of the Pluri-national State of Bolivia, Her Excellency PAULA NARVÁEZ, President of the United Nations Economic and Social

Council, Her Excellency, SÔNIA GUAJAJARA, Minister of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, and Mr LI JUNHUA, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. Likewise, during these two weeks we have counted with the valuable participation of high-level delegates from different Member States.

During the first week, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the First Conference on Indigenous Peoples, convened by the President of the General Assembly.

We were also honored with the participation of leaders of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations authorities, and Indigenous parliamentarians from the seven Indigenous sociocultural regions of the world, as well as many of our allies such as NGOs and academics. Thank you for stepping up and advocating for your rights. We are, and I am, proud of you.

Just as pastoralists do it in the Sahel, from where I come, all of us moved from our homes, as we do it every year in this season, to come all over to New York and spend time together to meet, discuss and advocate for making progress in the implementation of our rights. Through your participation, you keep the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues relevant, and **keep the fire of hope alive in this unique body**, the largest meeting between Indigenous Peoples. **BELIEVE ME:** we are changing the paradigm towards a more inclusive and fairer world. Thank you for stepping up and advocating for your rights. We are, and I am, proud of you.

Our discussions have emphasized that the right to self-identification is fundamental for expressing the identity and culture of Indigenous Peoples, and to uphold the principle of self-determination.

It has also shown the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination and self-government does not pose a threat to the unity nor the sovereignty of the Member States, but rather facilitates their inclusion through the expression of their unique contributions to their countries, starting from the differentiated political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, and in decision-making processes, in accordance with articles 3 and 4 of the Declaration.

We also counted with the participation the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The achievements they came to share in different areas and regions constitutes a fundamental contribution to our conversation, as their work is complimentary to **ours**.

Indigenous Peoples all over the world suffer the impact of inadequate green economy initiatives, including mining for critical minerals; We are also disproportionately impacted by the

creation of conservation areas that excludes us, and extreme conflicts in our lands, from the Pacific to Eastern Europe and Middle East, and sometimes even aggravated by climate change, like in the Sahel. We are grateful that, to tackle these issues, we heard that we have the support of several Member States, but that is not enough!

You know me. I'm not satisfied with words and intention. Our work goes well beyond these two weeks. It must be continued at home, and in all international forums. And we will be there. We will be in the 3 COPs this year, showcasing our solutions, and making countries and non-state actors accountable of their commitments and promises.

We will also need a UN system in all its strength, appropriately funded through the Trust Fund and the Voluntary Fund, and based on a common understanding and use of language about Indigenous Peoples.

Our youth hands are critical in weaving the future of our peoples. Being able to work with the Member States, the UN agencies, and other partners in making sure that our youth lives in a world of unity and peace, in which being Indigenous does not mean finding fractures and contradictions every time they come back home, in which the skills they were taught by their grandparents are valued by the society and can ensure a livelihood, in which they can speak their mother tongue without feeling exclusion, and in which they can build their future and at the same time honoring the past of their people, being who they are.

The Permanent Forum also heard numerous testimonies from Indigenous Peoples about their needs and concerns in relation to the "Financing of Indigenous Peoples' work and participation in the context of, inter alia, development, climate, environment and biodiversity".

We will take no excuse. Money is there, but Indigenous Peoples, who are leading on many issues are still excluded. The exchanges on that issue showed how the urgency of creating flexible, expedite mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples to have direct access to finance.

The agenda item on Human Rights remains an important area and many people signed up for the speakers' list. Just as every year, we sadly heard unacceptable stories about how Indigenous leaders and human rights defenders of Indigenous Peoples **are threatened, harassed and murdered** for defending their home. We will not forget them. We will honor them. We will continue to ask for justice.

In this Forum, we have heard from Indigenous Peoples that some States do not recognize their existence, which constitutes a denial of their rights, and a major obstacle for their well-being and resilience. That is unacceptable.

Dear Delegates,

we would like to remind Member States about the importance it has to comply with the obligations that follow from the Declaration of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the ILO Convention 169, as well as other international standards that contain the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In the same way, we would also like to call upon your support to do an effort to facilitate the participation of Indigenous Peoples to this forum and find means by which the visa procedure does not constitute an obstacle for all of us to hear their voices, to receive their contribution to our common issues.

I wish to remind States that Indigenous leaders and Indigenous human rights defenders who participate in meetings at the United Nations, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Expert Mechanism on Peoples' Rights Indigenous people **have the right to be protected from retaliation and harassment**. Therefore, the Permanent Forum urges States to guarantee the safe return and without reprisals to their countries of origin of all of them.

Dear Friends,

The Permanent Forum reiterates the call made in its 21st session to establish a **clear distinction between Indigenous Peoples and the local communities**.

Let me be clear: everyone is welcome to protect our planet and fight for our rights. But it should not be a pretext to dilute our rights.

Dear Friends,

As many Indigenous Peoples leaders, as many members of my community, I'm ambitious and optimistic. We will deliver. Not only for the youth that have participate to our debate. But for all citizen of this planet. Because when carbon is stocked in the soil in the Sahel, everyone benefit from it. Because when a forest is protected in the Amazon or in Asia, everyone can breathe the

fresh air. Because when a coral reef is saved, it can give birth to fish that will feed people all over the planet. We are not only guardians of the earth, but we are also guardians of humanity.

And to conclude, on a more personal note: In this session, we discuss a lot. We agree, we disagree. It's the life of the United Nations. As an Indigenous woman, I would like to add two points:

- First, we all need to give more room and respect for women and girls, and I will make sure of it.
- Second, we will not be judged on words, but on action. This is the most important part of our mission: Go home, proud of what we have done, and happy to start to deliver.

Merci / Thank you