

## **Draft Opening Remarks for ASG Spatolisano**

### **High-level launch event of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages**

**“Rights of Indigenous Peoples: a world in which Indigenous  
Peoples entrust their languages to future generations  
creating a better society for everyone”**

#### **High-level opening ceremony (16 December 2022)**

Excellency, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly,

Mr. Dario Mejia Montalvo, Chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum  
on Indigenous Issues,

Indigenous Peoples’ representatives,

Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to represent the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, at this important event to launch the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, is the most comprehensive international instrument guaranteeing the rights and development of Indigenous Peoples. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples worldwide, recognizing their linguistic rights.

In particular, the Declaration affirms their right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit their languages to future generations, and ensures access to education in Indigenous languages and control over their educational systems and media.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The existence of Indigenous Peoples is directly linked to the preservation of their languages and cultures. Their languages give them identity, autonomy and reflect their own worldview.

The preservation of Indigenous languages will ensure that Indigenous scientific and traditional knowledge is passed to future generations, thus continuing to contribute to a more diverse and sustainable world.

Indigenous practices have facilitated the restoration of forests and natural resources and preserved the world's biodiversity. Indigenous Peoples have taught the world cultivation techniques that are resilient to climate change. Their knowledge of plants has helped to develop multiple remedies for diseases.

Member States must create an environment where Indigenous languages and their cultures flourish, by making accessible public services in Indigenous languages.

The United Nations system can also play a critical role at the country level by supporting the use and thus, the preservation of Indigenous languages in programmatic areas such as education.

Ladies and gentlemen,

For the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to succeed, Indigenous peoples must lead the initiatives.

Therefore, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, Member States should adopt national and regional Action Plans aligned with the goals of the Decade and create the necessary institutions to support its goals.

Establishing a multistakeholder financial and technical mechanism to support Indigenous peoples' projects toward revitalizing their languages would also be an essential contribution by Member States and the private sector.

Let us take advantage of the opportunity offered by the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to work hand in hand with Indigenous Peoples to preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous Languages for this and future generations.

Thank you.