



## **STATEMENT OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

### **HIGH-LEVEL EVENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

New York, 16 December 2022

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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Thank you, Mr. President.

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples. Together, we are 22 States from different regions of the world.

The Group is comprised of: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, the Kingdom of Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Norway, New Zealand, Spain, Paraguay, Peru, the United States of America and my own country, Mexico.

We greet and welcome the representatives of Indigenous Peoples present, all of whom play a key role in the promotion and protection of Indigenous languages, knowledge and culture.

Mr. Chair,

Indigenous Peoples account for approximately 5 per cent of the global population, and speak 60 per cent of the world's estimated 7,000 languages.

Each Indigenous language represents a unique framework for understanding the world in all its complexity, and each is a repository of traditional knowledge.

Language is more than just words. It is at the essence of the identity of its speakers and the collective soul of its peoples.

Languages embody the history, culture and traditions of people, and they are dying at an alarming rate.

On average, a language disappears every two weeks. At this rate, by the end of the 21st century the world will have lost at least 2,000 languages, which would be a dramatic and tragic loss for humanity.

Mr. President,

The Group of Friends was key in the proclamation of the International Decade—as recommended by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues—and will continue to work on the milestones achieved during 2019, which marked the *International Year of Indigenous Languages*.

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages we launch today is a valuable instrument to revert this alarming trend and to preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages, including sign languages.

We renew our support to UNESCO as the lead agency for the organization of the International Decade, through its Global Action Plan, in collaboration with UN DESA and the OHCHR.

The Group of Friends recognizes the role of Indigenous Peoples in the protection of their languages and calls on all Member States to develop national action plans and mechanisms—in partnership with Indigenous Peoples—to strengthen Indigenous languages in line with the objectives of the International Decade.

Languages empower and connect its users. It is therefore important that the International Decade foster the participation and speak to the needs of women, youth, children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

While recognizing the ancestral knowledge of Indigenous People in the protection and preservation of “Mother Earth”, especially regarding Climate Change, through the strengthening of linguistic diversity, the International Decade can contribute to reaching the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals, and enhance our efforts for the effective promotion of human rights, as well as to advance the aims of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Furthermore, we recognize the important contribution that digital technologies can make to the preservation, revitalisation and promotion of Indigenous languages when digital solutions are led by, and respect the autonomy of, Indigenous Peoples. We therefore suggest an ongoing comprehensive dialogue on the best use of digital technologies for Indigenous-led digital inclusion and empowerment.

Mr. President,

When an Indigenous language disappears, a unique body of environmental, technological, social, economic and cultural knowledge that its speakers have codified and accumulated over millennia inevitably disappears.

Linguistic diversity is a form of human wealth. A language lost is a loss for all of humanity.

Preserving and promoting Indigenous Languages and multilingualism is about more than words.

It is about actions.

It is about raising awareness.

It is about promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is, ultimately, about embracing and celebrating our linguistic diversity.

The Group of Friends looks forward to the International Decade and the actions it will set forth.

Thank you.