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## **Statement on the International Women's Day**

*by the Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*

*Professor Megan Davis*

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Today, on International Women's Day, we would like to recognize and celebrate Indigenous Women.

Indigenous women are one of the most marginalized groups of the world. In peaceful societies, they face multiple levels of discrimination for being women, indigenous and most often poor. They face poverty, trafficking, illiteracy, landlessness and dispossession, non-existent or poor health care and often, violence and discrimination in both the private and the public sphere. We continue to hear reports of indigenous women and girls being raped. This violence is exacerbated in the midst of conflict – and indigenous women are targeted for being the face of their peoples and their cultures.

Yet, the role of indigenous women in peace-building is often overlooked. Examples from peace processes around the world show that women must be included in the formal peace negotiations for them to be sustained. At the same time, in some communities, indigenous women have used peace processes to advance increased participation at decision-making bodies in the post-conflict society. With their experience, knowledge and skills, indigenous women make valuable contributions to peace, and also to reconciliation, justice and healing. We will look at this in more depth during the forthcoming session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues with the special theme of indigenous peoples: conflict, peace and resolution (9-20 May 2016).

Indigenous women are the transmitters of indigenous cultures, their knowledge, and their traditions. They must be part of the solution, and have the resources, recognition and support to enable them to take charge of their destinies as actors and decision-makers.

On this International Women's Day, in solidarity with indigenous women around the world, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues calls on Member States, UN agencies, programmes and funds, as well as other partners to reinforce the rights of indigenous women; to provide the space for indigenous women to participate in decision-making processes; to support the empowerment and education of indigenous women and girls to become leaders; and to take concrete measures to overcome the violence, racism and structural discrimination indigenous women continue to face.