



Statement by

**HE Ambassador Rudolph Michael Ten-Pow
Permanent Representative of the Co-operative Republic of
Guyana to the United Nations**

**High-level event for the closing of the 2019 International Year
of Indigenous Languages**

Seventy-fourth session of the UN General Assembly

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Mr. President,

Guyana commends you for convening this High-level Event that focuses attention on the value of indigenous languages to peacebuilding, sustainable development and reconciliation. Today, we join with the international community in reiterating our commitment to promoting the inherent rights of indigenous peoples, as set out in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We recommit ourselves in particular to the ideals enshrined in Article 13 of the Declaration that indigenous peoples have the right to recover, use and pass on to future generations their histories and languages, oral traditions, writing systems and literature and the right to use their own names for communities, places and people.

The Constitution of Guyana contains express provisions for the protection, preservation and promulgation of the languages, cultural heritage and way of life of our indigenous peoples, who migrated from Asia and first settled in Guyana nearly 12,000 years ago. Amerindian Heritage Month is celebrated in September each year to showcase the skills, talents and craft of our indigenous peoples. The University of Guyana, our national university, has established a special language unit to preserve the nine different languages spoken by our indigenous peoples. Funding is provided in the national budget to promote the use of these languages and an Indigenous Peoples' Commission has been established to make additional recommendations for the protection, preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage and languages of our indigenous peoples.

In observance of the International Year, a number of activities were organized by the Government of Guyana through the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples'

Affairs aimed at rekindling appreciation for our indigenous languages and ensuring that they are preserved and passed down to the next generation.

Activities included the launch of an indigenous story-telling festival; a programme for the teaching of indigenous languages; compilation and printing of a dictionary and alphabet of selected indigenous languages; the creation of incentives for the development of indigenous music and written literature; and the inclusion of indigenous salutations, directions and basic courtesies in a tourist guidebook.

Longer-term plans include enacting legislation to incorporate Indigenous languages' education into the formal school system.

Mr. President,

Guyana is happy to join in today's milestone event to review the challenges and to share our experiences in the preservation, promotion and revitalization of the indigenous languages of the Guyanese people.

I thank you.