

## STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

14<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Agenda item 4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with  
reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

May 10, 2016  
New York

*Delivered by Judit Arenas, Director, External Relations / Deputy Permanent Observer*

Check against delivery

Chair,

Excellences,

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners and custodians of the land in which we meet today.

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) is the only intergovernmental organization exclusively mandated to advancing and promoting the rule of law. IDLO's work is committed to legal pluralism and the equal value of different legal systems, including traditional systems, consistent with human rights norms and standards. IDLO's vision is of a world where every person – including indigenous peoples – lives in dignity and under the rule of law, where principles of equality, cultural integrity, social inclusion, sustainable development and respect for human rights, are fostered and implemented.

These are the values that IDLO proudly shares with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that established for the first time in history a universal framework of standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of the world's indigenous peoples. The Declaration, adopted in 2007, addresses both individual and collective rights; cultural rights and identity; rights to education, health, employment, language, justice; all issues that are at the core of IDLO's work and activities. The Declaration outlaws discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them while it ensures their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own priorities in economic, social and cultural development.

Despite growing awareness of those rights enshrined in the Declaration, many of the world's indigenous peoples are still threatened by poverty, marginalization, the loss of their natural habitat – and in some cases, by outright extinction. Their social indicators are almost universally lower than those of ethnically dominant groups. Unacceptably, their life expectancy is shorter; the burden of unemployment and disease affects them disproportionately.

Still today, indigenous voices are rarely heard in processes and decisions that concern them directly. Indigenous cultures and traditions are also rarely taken into account in the establishment and drafting of development strategies. Development is undermined when people are unable to access information express their views and participate freely in decisions that affect them. IDLO has been active in the UN negotiations for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and in the discussion around the implementation of the new development framework and has advocated for all vulnerable groups to be part of such processes. We remain committed to ensuring that our work is shaped by actively involving beneficiaries in the design of our programmatic interventions.

IDLO sees the inclusion of the rule of law in the new development paradigm as a powerful tool to empower individuals - especially vulnerable groups - to fight discrimination; ensure equitable and affordable access to justice; set regulatory frameworks for natural resources management; encourage participation in decision making processes and support legal pluralism.

IDLO's Assembly of Parties was one of the first inter-governmental bodies since the adoption of Agenda 2030 to discuss, at its annual session last November, how both IDLO technical cooperation and its advocacy can maximize their contribution towards the new Agenda.

The Assembly mandated us to place the issue of IDLO's contribution to Agenda 2030 at the heart of the elaboration of a new Strategic Plan for the organization for 2017-2030 and, in so doing, to give priority to our contribution to capacity building - one of the crucial Means of Implementation promoted under Goal 17 - to help support and sustain progress towards Goal 16 and across the SDGs. IDLO looks forward to working with the Forum

In this context, IDLO is increasingly helping design rule-of-law based solutions to enhance indigenous peoples' access to justice. In 2014, we strengthened a framework established the previous year with the Ministry of Justice and the Judiciary of Peru to create a Protocol on Intercultural Justice. The initiative - the design of which involved both indigenous leaders and formal legal actors - aims to ensure that the nation incorporates indigenous perspectives, norms and linguistic diversity in the administration of justice. By end-2014, the Protocol had been put into practice in three target districts of the Peruvian Amazon. In 2015, in connection with the above mentioned project, access to justice for indigenous communities was enhanced through the translation of rights-awareness materials into *quechua*, *awajun* and *shawi* languages.

IDLO also supported the development of training materials to provide legal guidance to native community leaders. The project was the subject of *Mundos Encontrados*, a documentary which features cases of justice administration and conflict resolution in Peru's indigenous communities.

In Ecuador, we have focused on identifying key rights to open opportunities in areas like fair trade, food security, women's empowerment and sustainable resource management.

In Guatemala, we have formulated recommendations on how to reduce land-related conflicts as they affect indigenous peoples.

In sub-Saharan Africa, we have highlighted the impact of investment in sustainable land use on indigenous people.

IDLO stands ready to support, promote, and implement Indigenous Peoples rights as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and - following consultations with Indigenous Peoples - to provide its expertise in implementing the new development framework set out in Agenda 2030.

*The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) enables governments and empowers people to reform laws and strengthen institutions to promote peace, justice, sustainable development and economic opportunity.*