



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Statement by Martin Chungong Secretary General of the IPU

World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

Round table 2, “Implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples at the national and local level”.

**Trusteeship Council
22 September 2014**

Chairperson,

On behalf of the world parliamentary community, I thank the organizers for inviting us to this discussion.

The UNDRIP highlights that the participation by indigenous peoples in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of their respective States is essential to the fulfillment of their fundamental rights. This is underscored by the 2014 IPU Declaration of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, which affirms that indigenous peoples’ meaningful participation on all levels of government, and especially parliament, is necessary in order to ensure public policies that are sensitive to their situation, needs, and aspirations, and that such policies are accompanied by sufficient resources.

The participation of indigenous peoples through their representatives is of important symbolic value. It is a sign that the State recognizes that indigenous peoples have unique interests, needs and rights and also that their participation can provide solutions to complex environmental, development and governance problems that all societies face today.

Tomorrow I will have the honour to launch the report on a survey that examines the representation of indigenous peoples in parliament. The report shows that there are at least some 1,000 MPs that self-identify as indigenous, concentrated in 24 parliaments – a sizeable portion of the 46,000 MPs around the world. This positive development is in no small part a result of special electoral and capacity building measures among indigenous peoples to give them access to the parliamentary seats.

However, the report also finds that even where the representation of indigenous peoples by indigenous MPs is proportional to their share in society, meaningful participation in politics is not guaranteed. This is especially so where the number of indigenous representatives does not reach critical mass or where they lack incentives to represent the unique interest of indigenous peoples vis-à-vis broader constituencies.

Given the complexity of this issue and the uneven ways it plays out around the world, any effort to boost the number of indigenous peoples in parliament should be considered on a country-by-country basis and in consultation with indigenous peoples.

Meaningful participation, therefore, has to lead to actual results and indigenous MPs cannot achieve that in a vacuum. Parliaments as a whole need to take ownership of the UNDRIP by enacting legislation that enshrines and enforces indigenous peoples rights and budgetary measures to implement these rights. They need to build parliamentary institutions that allow indigenous MPs to cooperate effectively with non-indigenous MPs and that ensure that there are channels of communication between parliament and indigenous peoples on the ground.

To help bring parliaments on board in support of necessary reforms at the national level, IPU with OHCHR, UNDP, IFAD, SPFI and UNDESA, launched today a Handbook for Parliamentarians intended to be a practical instrument to enable parliamentarians around the world to better understand indigenous peoples' rights and provide practical ideas for the implementation of the UN Declaration. It also presents good practices of the recognition and exercise of indigenous peoples' rights in different regions of the world.

Thank you.