

# International Indian Treaty Council



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Open Working Group on Sustainable Development,  
Co-chairs' meeting with representatives of Major Groups and other  
Stakeholders: Human Rights, the Right to Development and Global Governance  
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Greetings Mr. Chair, on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group, I appreciate this opportunity to share these comments, which will generally focus on the global governance theme.

The UN System Task Team (UNSTT) in the report “Global governance and governance of the global commons in the global partnership for development beyond 2015”, advanced the understanding that “as the world becomes more interdependent, global governance, including global economic governance and the governance of the global commons, is increasingly relevant for achieving sustainable development.”<sup>1</sup>

The UNSTT also highlights a new global partnership for development in the post-2015 development framework that provides an opportunity to address global economic, social and environmental issues in a “coordinated, coherent and collaborative manner.” The overarching concept here is that the global partnership can promote a more “effective, coherent, representative and accountable global governance regime,” which in turn would affect national and regional governance for the better, as well as the realization of human rights and sustainable development.

At this point one might wonder just how can global governance help achieve such ambitious universal goals while respecting the principle of common, but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities.

From an indigenous perspective, global governance can help to achieve these ambitious universal goals only if it takes on the challenges of the inequalities and inequities that exist today, both within and among countries and peoples. With this in mind, and recalling GA/RES/66/288: The Future We Want” and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Member states and the UN system need to fulfill their expressed commitments to engage in meaningful partnerships with Indigenous Peoples.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, such partnerships should be based on the recognition of cultural diversity and culture as a fundamental enabler and driver of sustainable development. Moreover, these partnerships need to

build upon the UN human rights-based approach to development, which emphasizes universality, equality, participation, and accountability. The goal here should be to empower Indigenous Peoples' institutions, while building on indigenous knowledge practices and systems and strengthening Indigenous Peoples' economies and societies.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, at the local and national levels, there is a need to develop or strengthen the institutionalized mechanisms for consultation and participation of Indigenous Peoples, building on the fundamental principles of free, prior and informed consent and full participation in the development process. The role of the United Nations Country Teams here could be crucial. The establishment of collaborative and multi-sector partnerships between governments, civil society and Indigenous Peoples' governments, organizations, and institutions, would also be an enabler to drive action at all levels.

Indeed, elements of these types of partnerships and enablers are recognized within the *Rio + 20 Indigenous Peoples' International Declaration on Sustainable Development and Self-Determination*, which emphasizes three core elements and priorities for Sustainable Development for Indigenous Peoples including:

**1) Culture as a fundamental dimension of Sustainable Development; 2) Full exercise of the human and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples; and 3) Strengthening diverse local economies and territorial management.**<sup>4</sup>

Earlier this week we called on the OWG to integrate these priorities within the outcome of this process; however, looking toward the HLPF, policy coherence and institutional coordination between international institutions and national sustainable development strategies should be integrated by culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.<sup>5</sup> This would ensure that the various forms of inequality experienced by Indigenous Peoples, and that depend on structural and socio-cultural factors, are properly addressed, without a "one size fits all" approach to development.

Again, the establishment or strengthening of participatory mechanisms at the local, national, and even international levels that provide a meaningful opportunity for Indigenous Peoples to engage in a constructive dialogue with governments, civil society organizations, the UN system and other relevant stakeholders, should be a priority. This would allow for the design of development plans that aim for the implementation of international frameworks and better tailor policies and programmes that:

*(i) endorse the fundamental concept of development with culture and identity; (ii) adopt an inter-cultural and holistic approach to the well-being of indigenous peoples, especially when designing health and educational services; (iii) include culture as the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of development.*<sup>6</sup>

Finally, Mr. Chair we would like to close our presentation with a comment on the Global Commons. International law identifies four global commons - the High Seas, the Atmosphere, Antarctica and Outer Space. It is recognized that these "resource domains" – which are guided by the principle of the

common heritage of mankind. Additionally, we are aware that tropical rain forests and biodiversity - have more recently been included among the traditional set of global commons as well. With this understanding, we join others in defining global commons even more broadly, including science, education, information and peace.

The implementation of the common heritage principle and common responsibilities relate directly to the Post-2015 priorities identified by Indigenous Peoples, and as such we expect that efforts will continue to further enhance the representation and meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in multilateral institutions and other norm-and standard setting bodies. In this way, a more coherent global governance framework can be developed that is inclusive, centered on sustainable development, and integrates human rights concerns, including those of Indigenous Peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> See UN System Task Team report at:

[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam\\_undf/thinkpieces/24\\_thinkpiece\\_global\\_governance.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/thinkpieces/24_thinkpiece_global_governance.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> GA/RES/66/299 at 49 states “We stress the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples in the achievement of sustainable development. We also recognize the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the context of global, regional, national and subnational implementation of sustainable development strategies.”

<sup>3</sup> These positions are consistent with the “Talking Points on Good Governance, enabling environment and institutions at the core of implementing the SDGs Inter-sessional Meeting between Major Groups and Other Stakeholders and the OWG on SDGs” presented by Ms. Myrna Cunningham Kain, PFII on 22 November 2013. The document is available at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=165>.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/content/220-indigenous-peoples-release-rio-20-declaration>

<sup>5</sup> The Indigenous Peoples Major Group statement presented on 9 December 2013 is available at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4643indigenous.pdf>. GA/RES/66/88 at 84 states: “We decide to establish a universal, intergovernmental, high-level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission.”

<sup>6</sup> This position is consistent with the “Talking Points on Good Governance, enabling environment and institutions at the core of implementing the SDGs Inter-sessional Meeting between Major Groups and Other Stakeholders and the OWG on SDGs.”