

Indigenous peoples' forum opens at UN with call to turn rights into reality



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the opening of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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The annual United Nations forum aimed at advancing the rights of the estimated 370 million indigenous persons around the world opened today with a call to turn those rights into a practical reality.

More than 1,300 delegates are expected to participate in the two-week Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which is being held at UN Headquarters in New York and is marking its tenth anniversary.

This year the forum will focus on reviewing progress made on issues ranging from economic and social development to the environment and whether indigenous peoples have given free, prior and informed consent to decisions affecting their communities.

Opening the forum, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon [said](#) the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – adopted by the General Assembly in September 2007 – finally had the consensus support that it deserved.

“Now we need to make the declaration’s principles a reality,” he said, stressing that protecting and promoting the rights of indigenous peoples benefited everyone, and not only those groups.

Mr. Ban urged participants to “raise your voices” during the forum so that the world can hear about the threats and risks that indigenous communities face, as well as the unique expertise that they can bring to issues such as climate change.

“This forum can play a dynamic role in... helping indigenous peoples around the world achieve the self-determination they deserve. Your success can build momentum toward the World Conference in Indigenous Peoples planned for 2014. You can identify ways to bring to life the principles enshrined in the declaration.”

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