

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

--

**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**  
**9 August 2016**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by world leaders last year, is predicated on the principle of leaving no one behind in the journey to a world of peace and dignity, opportunity and prosperity. Among those most vulnerable to being left behind are indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples face a wide range of challenges including systematic discrimination, denial of their land and territorial rights and inadequate access to essential services. Indigenous peoples regularly face stigmatization of their cultural identity and lack of respect and recognition for their heritage and values, including in textbooks and other educational materials. Their marginalization is often compounded by language barriers. Instruction is mainly in the national language, with little or no instruction in, or recognition of, indigenous languages.

This has grave consequences. Around the globe, indigenous youth are graduating from high school at rates well below the national average. In some countries, less than 40 per cent of indigenous children attend school full-time. In many others, few indigenous children complete a full high school education. This is unacceptable. We will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if we fail to address the educational needs of indigenous peoples.

In recent decades, the world has progressed considerably in advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples. The United Nations now has three specific mechanisms to advance their cause: the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We also have the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007, the Declaration is the definitive benchmark for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

In September 2014, the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples adopted an action oriented outcome document to achieve the ends of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As a direct result we now have a UN System Wide Action Plan to promote awareness and action to support the implementation of the UN Declaration, particularly at the country level.

On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, I call on Governments everywhere to draw on the guidance of this international framework to improve access to education for indigenous peoples and to reflect their experiences and culture in places of learning. Let us commit to ensuring indigenous peoples are not left behind as we pursue the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals.