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Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 69: Rights of indigenous peoples
(*continued*)

(a) Rights of indigenous peoples (*continued*)
(A/72/186)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Sandoval Espínola** (Paraguay) said that her country's rich indigenous heritage was central to its national identity. Paraguay had 19 indigenous ethnic groups and numerous indigenous languages, including Guaraní, which shared official language status with Spanish and was widely spoken throughout the country. In that light, her delegation welcomed the International Year of Indigenous Languages and hoped that it would highlight the urgent need to preserve and protect indigenous languages, especially those in danger of extinction.

2. The Paraguayan Constitution recognized the pre-existence of the indigenous peoples and guaranteed their right to communal property and ethnic identity, as well as to participate in political life and to take decisions affecting their rights. Significant progress had been made on implementing indigenous rights in recent years, including enactment of an indigenous health law, gradual inclusion of indigenous families in the conditional cash transfer scheme and establishment of an indigenous housing construction programme.

3. Paraguay had been one of six countries selected by the secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to participate in a project to promote political dialogue between indigenous peoples, Governments and the United Nations system on the development of national action plans for indigenous peoples. It had already drawn up preliminary guidelines for public policies on the indigenous peoples and would be holding territorial consultations leading to a national action plan. Her Government knew that much more remained to be done and would continue to work alongside Paraguay's indigenous peoples to implement their rights and ensure the preservation of their culture, identity and traditions.

4. **Mr. Yao Shaojun** (China) said that countries with indigenous populations, especially developed countries, needed to find the political will to attain the Sustainable Development Goals related to indigenous peoples, to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to fulfil the

commitments made at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. They should focus on achieving poverty reduction and economic development, ensuring equal access to land and basic public services, safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms and preserving traditional cultures, languages and ways of life. All actions with a bearing on the rights and interests of indigenous peoples should be taken in consultation with them and with their prior consent.

5. There was no international consensus on the definition of "indigenous people". Not all countries had indigenous people, and native residents should not be equated to indigenous persons. The specific arrangements for enhancing the participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations meetings should be in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter, respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity of Member States and maintain the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations. The consultations on them should be led by Member States and result in a consensus agreement acceptable to all. China would continue to engage with all parties and to play a positive role in the consultations.

6. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, in his country, 12 October was Indigenous Resistance Day, in honour of the original people's historic struggle against the foreign colonists. The Venezuelan Constitution of 1999 recognized their social, political, economic and cultural rights, as well as their rights to an ethnic and cultural identity, to their own economic policies, to political participation and to the restoration of their ancestral lands. In the 10 years since its establishment, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples had made significant progress towards its primary objective of eradicating extreme poverty in indigenous communities. The rights of indigenous peoples were protected by special laws, including laws on language, health, education, land boundaries, collective ownership of land, production communes, women's issues and human rights. They had been enacted with the participation of indigenous legislators and were based on the principle of free, prior and informed consent. More than ever before, the indigenous peoples were a part of the Venezuelan development process.

7. **Ms. Cantada** (Philippines) said that the rights and protection of her country's indigenous peoples were guaranteed under the Constitution and by law. The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 recognized, inter alia, their right to self-governance and self-determination and their right to ancestral lands; it also required their free, prior and informed consent to any projects affecting them. The Philippines

promoted indigenous participation in the development and implementation of relevant policies and programmes through a system of indigenous peoples mandatory representatives. In addition, the membership of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, which was responsible for drafting the law establishing an autonomous region in Mindanao, had been broadened to include more indigenous persons.

8. The Philippines was implementing an indigenous peoples' education programme to provide culturally sensitive education, and it also operated a skills training programme especially for indigenous individuals. In addition, it had adopted culturally sensitive health programmes, such as a maternal, neonatal, child health and nutrition project in Mindanao which would eventually be extended to the country's other indigenous communities.

9. **Mr. Tituaña Matango** (Ecuador) said that his country had taken significant steps to implement the Declaration through its Constitution, its Criminal Code and its laws, including a citizen participation law, a lands and territories law and a law establishing the National Councils for Equality. The Constitution of 2008 recognized indigenous justice and the rights of the communities and peoples, including to right to maintain and nurture their identity, traditions and forms of social organization and the right not to be subject to racism or discrimination. Ecuador's intercultural round tables and its Agreement for Agriculture Round Table provided opportunities for intercultural dialogue and concertation. Lastly, he said that Ecuador commemorated the true meaning of 12 October by celebrating Plurinationalism and Interculturalism Day.

10. **Ms. Lobo Juarez** (Honduras) said that her country had taken a number of significant steps to honour the rights and legitimate, historical claims of indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples. The most important had been the establishment of the Directorate of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran Peoples to promote their development interests. As a result of its efforts, the legislature had approved a public policy on combating racism and discrimination against indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples, and a framework law on obtaining their free, prior and informed consent had been drafted in collaboration with representatives of those peoples, civil society, business and United Nations agencies. While much more needed to be done, Honduras was working steadily to promote a culture of respect for human rights based on dialogue with all sectors of society, and it paid special attention to the voices of historically marginalized groups such as the indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples.

11. **Ms. Kovacs** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that FAO considered indigenous peoples to be fundamental allies. Their traditional knowledge, combined with new technologies, offered tremendous opportunities for humanity. It remained committed to respecting and promoting their rights, whose fulfilment was essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

12. The FAO workplan on indigenous peoples addressed the topics of indigenous food systems; voluntary guidelines on the governance of tenure; indicators for food security; free, prior and informed consent; advocacy and capacity development, and climate change and traditional knowledge. At the recommendation of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, it was also focusing on indigenous youth and indigenous women. In that context, it had organized a meeting in April with the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus, and it was finalizing a global campaign on indigenous women, building on the experience of FAO leadership schools for indigenous women in India, the Philippines, Peru and Bolivia.

13. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ratifying and implementing the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169) was an important step towards achieving the objectives of the Declaration. There was a need for more widespread recognition of indigenous peoples and for more attention to national mechanisms, procedures and institutions for their participation in decision-making. In developing and implementing national action plans, strategies or other measures for achieving the ends of the Declaration, States should address indigenous peoples' issues as an integral part of wider national policies and programmes.

14. ILO had been increasing its efforts to include indigenous peoples' issues across the decent work agenda, with a special focus on the rights of indigenous women. For instance, with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, it had been working in Bangladesh, Bolivia and Guatemala to strengthen national capacities and processes for ensuring indigenous women's right to decent work in a number of sectors, including construction, domestic work and the tea garden industry.

15. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the claims of the representative of Ukraine were unfounded. The Crimean Tatars had the same rights as all other Russians, and the international instruments to which the country was a party applied to the entire territory, including Crimea and Sevastopol. All rights violations

were thoroughly investigated and perpetrators were held to account. In 20 years of independence, Ukraine had done nothing to improve the situation of the Crimean Tatars, despite the numerous recommendations of international human rights bodies. Kiev's sudden interest in their rights was purely political.

16. The Russian Federation had already done much for all the peoples in Crimea, including rehabilitating repressed peoples, and it had given the Tatar language government language status. It had also taken steps to develop Tatar culture and education in concertation with the Crimean Tartars themselves.

17. **Mr. Yarmenko** (Ukraine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were an integral part of Ukraine, and it would never recognize its annexation by the Russian Federation. A Russian citizen had no authority to sign an accession agreement on behalf of a region of Ukraine.

18. There were daily reports of new cases of persecution of Crimean Tatars. On Wednesday, for example, houses in the city of Bakhchysarai had been searched without cause, six people had been illegally arrested, and at least nine activists present only to show their support had been arrested at the same time. Targeted searches of Muslim homes were clear examples of persecution on religious grounds.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.