

STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

AT THE

**21ST SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM
ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**

HELD UNDER THE THEME

***“INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, BUSINESS, AUTONOMY AND THE
HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES OF DUE DILIGENCE, INCLUDING
FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT”***

**25 APRIL 2022
11:00 – 13:00 HOURS**

GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL

Please check against delivery

- **Distinguished Chair, and Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues;**
- **Distinguished Elders;**
- **Representatives of Member States, Indigenous Peoples' Organizations and NGOs, and the UN System Organizations;**
- **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. It is a great pleasure for me to address the opening of this **21st Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.**
2. I am particularly pleased to see the beginnings of a return to fully in-person sessions of the Permanent Forum, along with those of other UN bodies.
3. We all recall that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 session of the Forum did not take place at all -- while the 2021 session was nearly all virtual.
4. Despite all the challenges associated with access to virtual platforms by many Indigenous Peoples in all parts of the world, I am pleased that members of the Forum -- with the assistance of the Secretariat -- were

able to find ways, however imperfect, to continue your important work; and to provide the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with crucial analysis and recommendations on the situation of Indigenous Peoples during the Pandemic.

5. Moving forward, we are very hopeful that things will normalize getting into 2023, and that the Forum will resume full in-person sessions as before.

Distinguished participants,

6. As an advisory body to ECOSOC, the Permanent Forum's expert advice and recommendations are crucial in bringing to the forefront the key issues affecting Indigenous Peoples through the deliberations on a wide range and cross-cutting issues under your mandate, focused on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7. At the opening of the Forum last year, the world was still focused on the immediate socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time recognizing successful examples of Indigenous Peoples' responsiveness to it through traditional knowledge and autonomy.
8. The pandemic exposed -- and continues to expose -- inequalities at all levels. It set the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) back. However, it also compelled us to fully recognize the interlinkages between our environment, culture, economies, social development, and the peoples.
9. This recognition was reflected in the 2021 Ministerial Declaration of the High-Level Segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).
10. ECOSOC remains focused on enhancing the linkages and synergies in the work of its many subsidiary bodies to achieve the SDGs. I invite the Forum to continue contributing, and to enhance its cooperation with other fora in this collective endeavour.

Excellencies,

11. As you would all be aware, in July this year the HLPF will review in-depth five (5) SDGs, namely: **SDG 4**, on quality education; **SDG 5**, on gender equality; **SDG 14**, on life below water; **SDG 15**, on life on land; and **SDG 17**, on partnerships for the Goals.
12. The HLPF will also continue to focus on the impacts of the pandemic across all Goals and, importantly, the interlinkages between them.
13. It is gratifying to note that a recent review by ECOSOC of the work of its subsidiary bodies showed that the wide mandate of the Permanent Forum contributes to the implementation of nearly all the SDGs.
14. The focus for this year's HLPF and the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) by **45 Member States** offer a significant opportunity for Indigenous Peoples to bring to the discussions their own perspectives and traditional knowledge on biodiversity, climate change and sustainable environmental stewardship.

15. I, therefore, call on all Member States to pursue inclusive approaches and to proactively seek the participation of Indigenous Peoples in their national SDG review and reporting processes; and to invite Indigenous Peoples to contribute to and participate at the HLPF itself in July.
16. I am elated that the theme for this session of the Forum: ***“Indigenous Peoples, Business, Autonomy and the Human Rights Principles of Due Diligence, including Free, Prior and Informed Consent”***, and the ensuing discussions and recommendations, will continue to provide important cross-cutting perspectives to the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies.
17. Let me conclude, **Chair and distinguished participants**, by taking this opportunity to commend the work of the outgoing Chair and current Members of the Forum.
18. I also wish to congratulate you Chair on your election and also the newly elected Members, who will begin their three-year term in January 2023.

19. I wish you fruitful deliberations, and I look forward to your recommendations which should be built into the different ECOSOC platforms -- especially the outcomes of the HLPF in July.

I thank you for your kind attention.