



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

International Day of the World's Indigenous People

9 August 2009

Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay

The International Day of the World's Indigenous People is an opportunity to underline the importance of the rights of indigenous peoples and to pay tribute to the value and resilience of their cultures.

Since the introduction of the International Day by the UN General Assembly some fifteen years ago, we have achieved significant progress in our common efforts to advance the rights of indigenous peoples. This includes the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a genuine landmark in terms of human rights standards, and the launch of three UN mandates devoted to the rights of indigenous peoples.

Still, the reality faced by indigenous peoples is all too often far from the human rights principles contained in the Declaration and in human rights treaties.

We must step up our efforts to close this gap and make the Declaration something more than a pledge of intent. Today's International Day is an excellent occasion to reaffirm our commitment to translating positive developments in international human rights standards into concrete progress for indigenous peoples.

To achieve this, we all -- States, indigenous peoples, the United Nations system and others concerned - must join our efforts and reach solutions based on true dialogue, mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for human rights. This is no easy task. But it is the only way we can move the rights of indigenous peoples from paper to practice.

My Office is committed to advocating universal adherence and implementation of the Declaration and will continue to support human rights mechanisms dealing with the rights of indigenous peoples.

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