



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

9 AUGUST



UNITED NATIONS

United Nations marks International Day of Indigenous Peoples with call to promote their right to education

UNITED NATIONS, 8 August 2016 – This year, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (9 August) is devoted to indigenous peoples' right to education, given the persistent gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous students in terms of access to education, school retention and graduation rates in all regions of the world.

"On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, I call on Governments everywhere ... to improve access to education for indigenous peoples and to reflect their experiences and culture in places of learning," said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, adding, "Let us commit to ensuring indigenous peoples are not left behind as we pursue the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals."

A special event at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on Tuesday, 9 August, will include three indigenous experts on indigenous education: Karla Jessen Williamson, an Inuit from Greenland, currently teaching at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada; Octaviana Trujillo, a member of Arizona's Pascua Yaqui Tribe, teaching at Northern Arizona University in the United States; and Juan de Dios Simón Sotz, a Maya Kaqchikel, Director General of School Education at the Ministry of Education in Guatemala.

The discussion, to be moderated by Álvaro Pop, the Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, will focus on the major challenges indigenous peoples face in accessing education, in particular education that is culturally and linguistically appropriate and which is not viewed as a means of assimilation.

According to the upcoming report on the *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Volume III, on Education*, in Nunavut, the northernmost territory in Canada, Inuit high-school graduation rates are well below average, and only 40 per cent of all school-age indigenous children are attending school full time. In Australia, participation of indigenous 15-19 year-olds in higher education was 60 per cent in 2013, well below the 80 per cent participation for all Australians in the same age group. In Latin America and the Caribbean, on average, 85 per cent of indigenous children attend secondary education, but only 40 per cent complete that level of education.

The right of indigenous peoples to education is protected by Article 14 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which, among other things, states that "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning." Further, the UN Declaration provides the right for indigenous peoples to all levels of education within the State without discrimination.



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The right of indigenous peoples to education is also recognized by a number of other international human rights instruments, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Goal 4 of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* calls for ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples. However, the 2030 Agenda does not include indicators on mother-tongue language education, an area that indigenous peoples have been lobbying for.

There are an estimated 370 million indigenous people in some 90 countries around the world. Practicing unique traditions, they retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live.

Experts recommend efforts to ensure that indigenous peoples have access to education that is culturally and linguistically appropriate, with special priority given to indigenous women and girls as well as second-chance, vocational training and adult literacy programmes.

About the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The first *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, authored by independent experts and edited by the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, was published in 2009 and revealed alarming statistics on indigenous peoples' poverty, health, education, employment, human rights, the environment and other issues. *Volume II*, in 2015, examined the major challenges indigenous peoples face in terms of health care services. *Volume III*, to be published later this year, focuses on indigenous peoples' right to education.

About the International Day

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is commemorated annually on 9 August, in recognition of the first meeting of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, held in Geneva in 1982. The International Day was established by the General Assembly in December 1994.

UN offices around the world are celebrating the day with a variety of events and activities, including in Colombia, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Peru and Sri Lanka this year.

Contacts

Journalists without UN **media accreditation**, who wish to attend the UN event, please visit www.un.org/en/media/accreditation or call +1 212-963-6934 or 212-963-6937

For **media queries and interviews**, please contact Martina Donlon at +1 212 963 6816 or donlon@un.org in the UN Department of Public Information.

To contact the **Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**, contact Julia Raavad at +1 212 963 5873 or raavad@un.org in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

For more information on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, please see www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday or follow #WeAreIndigenous on Twitter.

To view a **live webcast** of the event, go to webtv.un.org from 2:50 to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 9 August.