



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON BEHALF OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**



**AT THE
THIRD COMMITTEE MEETING ON
AGENDA ITEM 68 (A):**

'THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES'

**9th OCTOBER, 2023
NEW YORK**

FINAL TEXT

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the fourteen member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on Agenda Item 68 (a): Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

For CARICOM, Indigenous Peoples play a crucial and irreplaceable role, representing a wealth of cultural, historical, and ecological significance for our region. As the original inhabitants and stewards of these lands, their deep-rooted connection with the environment and intricate knowledge of local ecosystems makes them invaluable partners for sustainable development, environmental conservation, and climate resilience building. Their traditional practices, which embody sustainable approaches, offer valuable insights into harmonious coexistence with nature- a vital aspect for a region confronted with mounting environmental and climatic challenges.

Mr. Chair,

While strides have been taken to rectify historical injustices and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, there remains a stark and disheartening reality: Indigenous Peoples continue to face significant challenges and are consistently disadvantaged in various aspects of life which hinder their advancement and social inclusion. These challenges manifest through unequal access to quality education and healthcare, employment opportunities, limited participation in decision making, and persistent discrimination, to highlight a few.

In recent years, the situation has taken a more concerning turn. The cumulative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating pace of climate change, and the growing inequality within and between nations have disproportionately impacted Indigenous communities, further pushing them to the margins.

Indigenous Peoples continue to battle with the harsh consequences of the escalating climate crisis, as they frequently inhabit areas that are particularly vulnerable. Extreme weather events, changing precipitation patterns, and environmental degradation, pose

significant threats to their traditional way of life, leading to loss of livelihoods and cultural heritage.

We can no longer overlook this reality. The situation necessitates urgent, comprehensive, and targeted global actions to address the longstanding inequalities and ensure that the well-being of Indigenous Peoples is prioritized. A goal which CARICOM remains committed to and will continue to support all efforts in this regard.

Mr. Chair,

Indigenous Peoples have often found themselves underrepresented in decision-making processes, impeding their ability to shape policies and initiatives that not only affect their well-being, but are in fact, designed for them. This persistent gap highlights a systemic issue where promises of equality and justice have not materialized into tangible improvements.

Inclusive development is synonymous with sustainable development. CARICOM therefore believes that it is essential to integrate Indigenous perspectives into development frameworks and policies. By acknowledging and respecting them as crucial stakeholders, we can achieve a world that embraces diversity, respects cultures, and upholds the principles of social justice, equality, and environmental stewardship.

CARICOM thanks the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples for his comprehensive report, and welcomes the recommendations contained therein. We recognize the importance of reconciling tourism development with the rights and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples across our Member States.

Tourism is a major driver of economic growth and development for our region, providing a wealth of opportunities for our people. It is therefore vital that these benefits are shared equitably, including with our Indigenous communities. CARICOM is committed to identifying and adopting best practices and initiatives that empower Indigenous Peoples to actively engage in and benefit from the tourism sector, while safeguarding their cultural heritage. This is

anchored in a firm belief that by doing so, we aim to ensure that our regional tourism industry becomes a force for good, promoting cultural understanding, and preserving the natural and cultural treasures that make our nations unique.

Mr. Chair,

This year, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was celebrated under the theme “Indigenous youths as agents of change for self-determination” which is fitting for today’s global landscape. Indigenous youth are the future custodians of their cultures and traditions, and by providing them with the tools and knowledge needed to navigate the modern world, we can further bridge the gaps that exist and ensure the long-term well-being and sustainability of Indigenous communities and cultures. Empowering Indigenous youth through education, skill development, mentorship, and access to opportunities not only secures their future but contributes to broader societal development.

Moreover, as we work towards a more inclusive and equitable society, addressing all forms of discrimination against Indigenous Peoples, particularly focusing on the unique challenges faced by Indigenous women, is paramount. CARICOM reaffirms the importance of providing targeted initiatives to break down barriers and amplify the voices of Indigenous women and girls, such as through educational scholarships, entrepreneurial and small business support, and physical and mental health care programs.

Mr. Chair,

There is no doubt that Indigenous Peoples are integral to the fabric of CARICOM. While the journey to ensure the full realization of their rights has not been without its challenges, we remain committed to addressing the shortfalls through inclusive dialogue and respectful partnerships, at all levels. In this regard, we further welcome the report of the Expert Mechanism entitled “Efforts to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: establishing effective monitoring mechanisms at the national and

regional levels for the implementation of the Declaration" which provides best practices and recommendations to achieve the ends of the Declaration.

Excellencies,

We cannot allow history to perpetuate a cycle of marginalization, discrimination, and loss of cultural identity. Recognizing these wrongs is the first step towards fostering genuine reconciliation and creating a future where everyone is treated with equality, respect, and the opportunity to thrive. Let us aspire to build a society that upholds human rights and ensures a just and inclusive world for current and future generations.

You can count on CARICOM's full and engaging support as we work together in advancing the important agenda before us.

I Thank you.