**17th session UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**8-12 July 2024**

***Item 5***

**Intervention by Ms. Marjolaine Etienne**

Member of the Board of Trustees

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples

Madam Chair, Madam Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, representatives of Indigenous Peoples, Your Excellencies, friends and colleagues,

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to take the floor to address the 17th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples .

At the outset, I must acknowledge the 20 grantees of the Fund from 20 countries, (of whom 9 are women and 11 men and 10 indigenous youth) who are present with us today, making an important contribution to the success of this session. In the same vein, I am delighted to share that the Fund is supporting 19 grantees for the First intersessional meeting of the Human Rights Council on concrete ways to enhance the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the work of the Council taking place next week in Geneva, some of them are already participating in the EMRIP Session. I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues in the Board of Trustees of the Fund namely: Mr. Pablo Miss (Belize), Ms. Tukumminnguaq Nykjær Olsen (Greenland/Denmark); Mr. Dev Sunuwar (Nepal); and Ms. Jane Meriwas (Kenya).

Madam Chair, the Fund is mandated to provide support to Indigenous Peoples representatives in the sessions of key UN meetings and processes most relevant to Indigenous Peoples. The Fund, over the last 39 years, has and continues to diligently deliver on this mandate. In these 39 years, the mandate of this Fund has been expanded several times and it has supported about 4,000 indigenous representatives in United Nations human rights mechanisms and processes.

Madam Chair, I am delighted to report that in 2023 alone, the Fund supported the participation of 126 indigenous representatives from 47 countries, in 14 UN meetings and processes. Of the total number of grantees, 69 were indigenous women and 57 men, of which 52 were indigenous youth, 5 were indigenous persons with disabilities and 5 who self-identified as member of the LGBTIQ+ communities. From January to July 2024, the Fund has already supported 136 grantees in 11 UN meetings and processes; among them are 67 women & 63 men, 2 transgender women, 2 Two-spirited men and 2 Two-spirited women from 46 countries.

Mr. Chair, I want to highlight that the beneficiaries of the Fund are indigenous representatives who bring accurate information and a deeper knowledge of the problems affecting them in all regions of the world. In many instances, without the assistance of the Fund, these representatives would not be able to participate in the United Nations meetings. By participating the Grantees bring attention to and advocate for remedies to human rights violations they face in their communities and territories.

The Fund does not stop at providing only financial travel grants to Indigenous Peoples. A priority of the Fund is effective participation and effective participation requires increased capacity. Therefore, The Board of Trustees of the Fund allocates resources to **build the capacity** of Indigenous Peoples. The Fund and its partner NGOs, indigenous organizations and the members of Indigenous-specific UN mechanisms regularly organizes human rights training sessions in Geneva and New York in the margins of the annual sessions of EMRIP, the Permanent Forum, including in the venues of the Climate Change meetings. To expand the reach of these trainings to all Indigenous Peoples from around the world, they are offered on-line.

In 2023 alone, the Fund and its partners carried out 14 online training courses and 5 in person training, as part of its preparatory training for its grantees and any interested individuals on indigenous issues and the UN systems. Over 2,000 participants benefitted from the online trainings and additionally, about 150 indigenous representatives benefitted from the 5 in-person trainings that were held in New York, Geneva and Dubai.

Since January 2024 to date, the Fund, in collaboration with its partner organizations, has already carried out 13 online trainings and 2 in-person trainings on the UPR process, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN Climate Change processes and till last week, the EMRIP; with over 1,000 participants.

Madam Chair, I would like to highlight that the Fund, in collaboration with its partner organization has developed an annual training calendar, following the cycle of UN meetings and processes that the Fund is mandated to support. Most importantly, the online trainings courses of the Fund are made available in five languages: namely, English, French, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese, making the Fund the largest provider of training and capacity building initiatives to Indigenous Peoples in the whole UN system.

Madam Chair, for 2024, at its 38th annual session of the Board of Trustees, approximately USD600,000 was allocated to support the participation of 173 indigenous representatives in the mandated UN meetings and processes. There is an increasing demand for support from indigenous representatives to the Fund. Annually the Fund receives between 4,000-5,000 applications. This increase is consistent with the recent expansions of the mandate of the Fund in the field of business and human rights and climate change. These expansions created new and significant opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to scale up their participation in advancing human rights protection related to businesses and climate action in their lands and territories. While this is extremely positive, it also means that the demands on the resources of the Fund increased. To put this into perspective, of the 4,000-5,000 annual applications the Fund supports on average between 150-170 indigenous representatives. This amount represents approximately 3 percent of the total request. There is no doubt that the Fund has come a long way in contributing to increased international awareness and action of the rights, status, and conditions of Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

Madam Chair, with this said, in 2025 the Fund will celebrate its 40th anniversary. In the spirit of celebrating the advances made on the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and their representatives in the UN system, I would like to appeal to all Governments to consider supporting the vital work of the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples. The Fund would not be in a position to carry out its mandate without sustainable financial support. In this regard and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Governments of Australia, Canada, Estonia, Mexico, New Zealand Norway, , Peru and the Philippines for their contributions in 2023.

I thank you Madam Chair and wish you and all the EMRIP members a very successful session.