General Debate: Building Momentum towards the SDG Summit

Submission of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group on the SDGs\*

19 July 2023, Trusteeship Council, presented by Roberto Múkaro Borrero, International Indian Treaty Council \*Check Against delivery  
  
Thank you Mr. President for this opportunity to address you on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group.

The UN Secretary General is hopeful that the SDG Summit will “mark the beginning of a new phase of accelerated progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals with high-level political guidance on transformative and accelerated actions leading up to 2030.”

At this time, the Indigenous Peoples Major Group does not share the same optimism. As indicated by the latest draft of this Forum’s Political Declaration, para 23, Indigenous Peoples are still only seen as “vulnerable groups” and not as key partners for sustainable development at the local, national, regional, and global level. We call for inclusion in para 23.  
  
We commend the specific focus that the Political declaration has on women and girls, migrants, and persons with disabilities.  We trust this specific focus will continue into and during the SDG Summit. However, as the Political Declaration will contribute significantly to building momentum towards the SDG Summit, we remain concerned that it fails, in para. 14, to mention that it is critical to ensure Indigenous Peoples actively participate in and equally benefit from sustainable development efforts.  We call for inclusion in paragraph 14 & 19.

Like the Climate Change and Biodiversity agendas, the SDGs will not succeed without the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the other Major Groups and stakeholders. As recently noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, Indigenous Peoples lands territories comprise about 25 percent of the world’s land surface, including approximately 40 percent of all protected land areas and 80 per cent of the remaining terrestrial biodiversity.”

Considering this information, the SDG Summit’s focus on “transformative and accelerated actions” is concerning especially as the Political Declaration does not reference or reaffirm critical human rights standards such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or support specific data disaggregation for Indigenous Peoples.

In closing, we call on the SDG Summit organizers to ensure, as it should be for the Voluntary National Reviews, the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, and safe spaces for our delegates to engage without fear of reprisals.