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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(a) **International Parliamentary Conference on *Parliaments and the rights of indigenous peoples***

7 - 9 April 2014 - Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

As part of its democracy-strengthening activities, the IPU devotes a great deal of attention to the political participation and inclusion of all sectors of society in decision-making processes and the management of public affairs.

Since 2007, it has been conducting a research programme on the representation of indigenous peoples in parliament aimed at enhancing their participation in politics. The International Parliamentary Conference held in 2010 in Chiapas (Mexico) was part and parcel of this project. The Chiapas Declaration contains the main recommendations for parliaments to be truly representative, to guarantee the meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in politics and ensure that their basic rights are respected and their needs taken into account.

As a follow-up, the IPU co-organized with the Plurinational Legislative Assembly of Bolivia a second International Parliamentary Conference, this time on "Parliaments and the rights of indigenous peoples", in Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia), from 7 to 9 April 2014. A total of 110 participants from 22 African, South American, Asian and European countries took part in the event. The parliamentarians were able to exchange experiences and good practices, identify obstacles encountered by parliaments in their efforts to guarantee the political representation of indigenous peoples and protect their rights. The Conference formulated a constructive contribution by parliaments to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, which was held on 21 and 22 September in New York.

The main outcome of this Parliamentary Conference, the Declaration of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and related recommendations are found in [Annex](#).

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**INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON:
PARLIAMENTS AND THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**Jointly organized by the Plurinational Legislative Assembly of Bolivia and
the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

7 - 9 April 2014 - Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Declaration of Santa Cruz de la Sierra

We recognize that important progress has been made in many countries to combat discrimination and uphold the rights of indigenous peoples. New laws have been adopted and existing laws have been strengthened. Several States now provide for indigenous peoples to have a say in decision-making that affects their lives through mechanisms that seek their free, prior and informed consent.

We note, nonetheless, that we have a very long way to go. Indigenous peoples have the inalienable right to full and equal membership of our nations and this right has yet to be translated into public policies that are sensitive to their situation, needs and aspirations and accompanied by sufficient resources. This requires a meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in all countries at all levels of government and parliament. This also means that all public policies must be submitted for their prior consultation.

We affirm the continued validity of the *Chiapas Declaration*.¹ We urge all Parliaments to implement its call for action whereby every Parliament will work to:

1. Recognize the diversity in society and adopt a Plan of Action to make the right to equal participation and non-discrimination a reality for indigenous peoples everywhere;
2. End discrimination and provide for meaningful participation of indigenous peoples, and in particular indigenous women, in decision-making in parliament and elsewhere;
3. Ensure that indigenous peoples can effectively monitor the activity of their representatives in Parliament and hold them to account for their actions and omissions.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrines the rights of indigenous peoples and proposes procedures for their implementation. We urge Parliaments to translate the Declaration into national law and to seize every opportunity to promote awareness of it among all sectors of society, including among indigenous peoples themselves in their traditional languages and among the judiciary. In the same vein, we urge parliaments to work closely with national human rights institutions.

We draw attention to the *Quebec City Declaration*,² which recommends additional measures for parliaments to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including by using the Declaration as a basis for reconciliation processes.

We invite Parliaments to ensure that all legislative proposals are accompanied by an assessment of their potential impact on indigenous peoples. We suggest that such assessments must be based on the standards contained in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and that they include an analysis of their impact on indigenous women and men.

We are encouraged by recent advances to ensure that indigenous peoples are consulted on matters that affect their lives and to implement their right to free, prior and informed consent. We emphatically reiterate that the operative word is "consent" and that mere consultation does not meet the requirement of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. We insist that the fundamental objective of all consultation procedures should be to obtain free, prior and informed consent.

¹ Declaration adopted by the participants of the International Parliamentary Conference on "Parliaments, Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Effective Participation in Politics", held in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico, from 31 October to 3 November 2010.

² Declaration summarizing the debate during the 127th IPU Assembly (Quebec City, October 2012) on the theme "Citizenship, identity and linguistic and cultural diversity in a globalized world".

We are concerned by the exploitation of indigenous peoples' land, territories and resources without their free, prior and informed consent. We call on industry, private businesses and other parties to uphold the standards contained in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, abide by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council and follow the Business Reference Guide to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples issued by the United Nations Global Compact.

We welcome the decision to convene a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and urge States to reach an early agreement that will allow indigenous peoples to have a meaningful role in the proceedings of the Conference and in the formulation of its outcome document.

We call on States to ensure that the Conference outcome document builds on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in no way detracts from the global minimum standards it contains. We thank the Government of Mexico for its invitation to host a preparatory meeting and hope that this meeting can take place as soon as possible.

We call on the World Conference to draw attention to the need for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda to emphasize well-being in all its dimensions as opposed to mere economic growth. For indigenous peoples, a sustainable development agenda can only be one that is respectful of their cultures, lands, territories and resources.

We would like to see the World Conference call for the inclusion of clear goals and targets related to participation, transparency and accountability in the new sustainable development agenda. Being able to participate in decision-making that affects our lives and the social and environmental context around us is in itself a key dimension of well-being and particularly essential for indigenous peoples.³

We also call on the World Conference to recognize the role of parliaments in ensuring that indigenous people have access to decision-making and that their rights are upheld. We will submit a series of specific parliamentary actions for the consideration of the World Conference.

We invite the United Nations to declare a third international decade of the world's indigenous people.

We call on the IPU to monitor implementation of this Declaration and to promote parliamentary follow-up of the outcome of the World Conference. We invite the IPU to work with United Nations agencies, funds and programs to develop programmes of activities to strengthen the participation of indigenous peoples in parliaments and to facilitate parliamentary action in support of making their rights a reality. We encourage the IPU to facilitate networking among parliaments and invite it to convene a first global conference of indigenous members of parliament.

³ See also the *Quito Communiqué* adopted by the 128th IPU Assembly (Quito, March 2013) summarizing the debate on the theme of *From unrelenting growth to purposeful development "buen vivir": New approaches, new solutions*.