

## INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Over half of the world's indigenous peoples are women, living in over 90 countries. In the last 20 years, indigenous women have increasingly participated in international processes to assert the rights of indigenous peoples, of women and related rights. As it may be known, 20 years ago in Beijing, during the United Nations 4<sup>th</sup> Conference on Women, indigenous women approved and signed the **Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women**, setting the basis of indigenous women's claims as indigenous people and as women. The conference was the first time that indigenous women had the chance to highlight collectively their diverse cultures at the international level. Since the Beijing landmark, indigenous women have been advocating and gained more space within the women's movement and the indigenous peoples' movement.

### **Indigenous Women Advancements and pending challenges 2014**

2014 was a year of challenges as well as many accomplishments for the indigenous women's movement at the international level. Indeed, 2014 was the first time ever that the United Nations General Assembly held a High Level Plenary Meeting on Indigenous Peoples - known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP). The World Conference was an opportunity for indigenous women from different regions to advocate, connect, raise awareness on their achievements and needs, and to and continue fighting for their rights. As an outcome of indigenous women's hard work and advocacy efforts, many of their demands were included in the WCIP's Outcome Document, especially in paragraphs 17 to 19, that focus on empowerment of indigenous women through political participation, capacity building and leadership, on data disaggregation by gender and ethnicity, holistic indicators, on sexual and reproductive rights, and on violence against indigenous women and girls.<sup>1</sup>

Such process was possible thanks to an intense preparatory process in which indigenous women actively advocated and reached consensus for their voices to be heard and fully considered. Indeed, indigenous women from the seven socio-cultural regions gathered in Lima, Peru in 2013 at the World Conference of Indigenous Women, where they adopted the Lima Position Document and Plan of Action, as a political advocacy roadmap in face of the international processes of the next year, including the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, CSW 59-Beijing+20, Cairo+20 and the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Another sphere of active engagement of indigenous women and their organizations has been the preparatory process for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) 2015 Forum on Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous women played a key role in the organization and participated in the four regional preparatory workshops that were held in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

Within the women's movement, indigenous women have increasingly participated at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). As a result, in past years they advocated and achieved the adoption of two resolutions on indigenous women by the CSW: "Indigenous women: beyond the ten-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", which urges the adoption of measures that ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous women in all aspects of society;<sup>2</sup> and "Indigenous women: key actors in poverty and hunger eradication",<sup>3</sup> which urges States and agencies of the United Nations system to adopt measures aimed at promoting the empowerment of indigenous women and the realization of their rights. Both resolutions help set an agenda and more focus on indigenous women's particular situation and, along with the WCIP Outcome Document recommendations, support their current advocacy efforts within the frame of CSW, where they demand to consider the issue of the empowerment of indigenous women at a future period of sessions.<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous women still face discrimination, structural and physical violence, invisibilization, poverty and marginalization. Their efforts show that their struggle and their articulation prove effective as they struggle and progress in making their voices heard, so that their rights will be ensured and fully exercised at the local, national, regional and global levels. Our accomplishments step by step, year by year, help us continue our road with more strength and confidence. ○

## Notes and references

- 1 A/69/L.1
- 2 Resolution E/2005/27
- 3 Resolution E/CN.6/2012/L.6
- 4 A/RES/69/2, 19

*This article has been written by the **International indigenous Women's Forum-FIMI**. The International Indigenous Women's Forum/ Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI by its Spanish acronym) was born in 1995. FIMI is a coordinating global body with the mission to bring together indigenous women leaders and human rights activists from different parts of the world in order to coordinate agendas, build capacities and to develop leadership skills for participation in international decision-making processes by ensuring the consistent and serious inclusion of indigenous women's perspectives in all discussions regarding human rights.*

*FIMI, as a global network that articulates indigenous women leaders of Africa, Asia the Americas, the Arctic and the Pacific has actively participated in each of the annual sessions of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), and in the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). FIMI is currently developing four strategic programs: the Political Participation and Advocacy Program, the Indigenous Women Global Leadership School, Indigenous Women's Watch against Violence and the Indigenous Women's Fund-AYNI.*

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