

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to thank you and the Secretary-General for the statements made at the beginning of this Meeting. The interest and commitment displayed by you and the Secretary-General in the two statements to the cause of the indigenous people deserve credit and admiration.

Mr. President,

2. Malaysia joins the other members of the United Nations in proclaiming 1993 as the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. Indeed, the time has come for the International community to recognise the existence, the disadvantage and the mistreatment suffered by the indigenous people throughout history especially since the discovery of the so-called new world. Political memories usually run short but even as we make our commitment today on alleviating the lot of the indigenous people, it would only be honest to recall the horrible deeds of the past inflicted on thousands and thousands of indigenous people, especially in the Americas in the name of so-called civilization and religion. My delegation does not believe any action now can atone for those perpetrated by the immigrant races coming as so-called conquerors, spiritual teachers and settlers, exterminating resistance and wresting control. Those acts of infamy not only eliminated thousands of indigenous people but also forefeited for the world a rich and varied legacy of culture, values and thought processes.

3. In the context of the above, if historical culpability is a factor, we should question those countries responsible in terms of their commitments now. The United Nations cannot lend support to certain countries undertaking acts of tokenism to absolve actions of the past. Much worse, these countries should not now be so-called champions pointing fingers at others.