



Check against delivery

**Second session of the Human Rights Council**

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**Reports, studies and other documents prepared by the Secretariat, the HC, the OHCHR or the  
Secretary-General**

Nadir Bekirov,

Chairperson of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity to address the Council on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations.

The Voluntary Fund was created pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/131 in 1985, with the purpose of assisting representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. The Mandate was expanded on two occasions by the General Assembly to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Populations and Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Since the establishment of the Fund, more than a thousand indigenous representatives have been supported.

The Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations has given indigenous peoples a voice at the United Nations by providing them with the opportunity to raise their issues internationally, participate in meetings where decisions affecting their lives are taken, contribute to the deliberations with their first hand experiences, dialogue with Governments and UN Agencies and network with other indigenous peoples and non-governmental organizations.

Their presence at UN meetings has helped them to develop their leadership capabilities and expertise, and has led in some cases to solving issues directly with governmental delegations. The Fund has ensured that indigenous peoples are involved in standard setting activities affecting them.

The value of their statements, knowledge and relationships established in these meetings have been of great utility for beneficiaries themselves as well as for other participants.

The increasing number of requests and the limited available funding presents the Board of Trustees with tough choices. For example, at the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Board of Trustees that took place in February 2006, 400 admissible applications were received and examined by the 5 independent indigenous experts who recommended to the Secretary General to distribute about USD 444'000 between 101 beneficiaries to participate in sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the two Working Groups. Regrettably, a large number of representatives: 75 per cent, have to be turned down.

Information on the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Board of Trustees can be found in this year's report to the WGIP (E/CN.4Sub.2/AC.4/2006/4). More information, including charts and statistics will be available in the report to the General Assembly that will be issued in the next couple of weeks.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our new donors: Australia, Brazil, France and Switzerland and regular donors Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Japan, Norway, New Zealand and Venezuela for their invaluable contributions. I invite all of them to maintain their support to the Fund to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples in these meetings.

*On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would also like to appeal to all Governments, organizations and private donors to consider contributing to the Voluntary Fund, if possible before the next meeting of the Board in March 2007, and if possible with a substantial increase in their contributions, in support of indigenous peoples worldwide and in order to enable the Fund and Board of Trustees to fulfill its mandate.*

The Board welcomes the adoption by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This means that the inter-sessional Working Group on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has completed its work.

The Human Rights Council may wish to consider how the mandate of the Board of Trustees can be brought in line with recent developments.

The Board of Trustees is aware that the Sub-Commission by its resolution 2006/13 of 24 August 2006 recommended that States consider asking the General Assembly to broaden the mandate of the Voluntary Fund so as to allow indigenous peoples to participate in the human rights treaty bodies and to provide funding for human rights projects to indigenous organizations.

We would very much welcome an opportunity to consult with all donor governments to review the viability of such recommendations.

I thank you very much Mr. Chairman.