

**ECOSOC Regular Session of 2007
Meeting of Chairpersons of Functional Commission of ECOSOC and the Council,**

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Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Introduction

Mr. President of the Council,
Excellencies,

1. It is again a pleasure for me to participate at this meeting of the Chairpersons of the Council's functional commissions and the Council. Although the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is not a functional commission as such, our broad mandate in the areas of economic and social development, environment, health, education, culture and human rights, makes it that our work interfaces with the almost all the functional commissions. The Forum's mandate to integrate indigenous issues in the UN system makes us pursue close relations with the various commissions, such as exchanging presentations and submitting papers at each other's sessions, as well as cooperation among our respective secretariats. This has been for example the case in relations between the Permanent Forum and the Commission on the Status of Women, the Forum on Forests, the Commission on Sustainable Development and others.

How the UNPFII has contributed to MDG 1 on the eradication of poverty and hunger, as well as the broader implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs

2. Until now the Permanent Forum has responded in various ways to the themes and priorities set by ECOSOC, including the themes of the Council's substantive and coordination segments. The Permanent Forum has devoted its 2005 and 2006 sessions to the MDGs and at this year's session this past May it focused, among other things, on the implementation of its recommendations related to the MDGs. The Forum examined each MDG and its significance for indigenous peoples and articulated what measures are needed for each MDG to be implemented for and with indigenous peoples, so that they are not forgotten in these processes and do not continue to suffer from marginalization in the countries where they live.
3. MDG 1, "eliminate extreme poverty and hunger", viewed as the umbrella MDG in a certain sense, was approached by the Permanent Forum both in terms of preparing comprehensive recommendations to all actors concerned and in terms of monitoring and promotion of awareness and capacity-building. Regarding MDG 1 in particular the Permanent Forum expressed concern that unless the MDGs processes take into account the particular situation of indigenous peoples, they may lead to accelerated loss of indigenous peoples' traditional lands and natural resources, forced displacement and forced assimilation—and overall a negative impact on their livelihoods.

The Forum has thus called on the international community to listen to and take into account indigenous peoples' visions of their own development.

4. I was tasked by the Forum to prepare a report on "MDGs and Indigenous Peoples" and this was presented during the 2005 session. One of my findings is that in some countries with indigenous peoples where their economies have grown substantially, the poverty situation of indigenous peoples has worsened. A study commissioned by the Asian Development Bank shows that the worst poverty situation in Viet Nam is among the ethnic minorities (indigenous peoples) who live in the Highland areas of Northern and Central Vietnam. This study cited 1998 data from the Institute for Economic Survey which says that ethnic minorities accounted for 28 percent of poor people in the nation while they compose 14 percent of the total population.
5. A comprehensive set of recommendations were made by the Forum to Governments, the UN system, indigenous organizations, the private sector and others, on how to engage indigenous peoples in the MDG processes. The Forum has encouraged indigenous peoples to learn about the MDG under the MDG Campaign—and a special page on the website of the Secretariat of the Forum is devoted to the MDGs.
6. A major focus of the Forum's recommendations is the need to promote full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the preparation, execution, monitoring and evaluation of national programmes related to the MDGs. Issues of governance, including indigenous governance within their communities related to MDG 1 were underlined as crucial for indigenous peoples.
7. Similarly, data collection and disaggregation, has been stressed by the Forum as indispensable so that negative realities in indigenous communities are not hidden behind national averages, but revealed and addressed by public policies and programmes.
8. In order to connect the MDGs with other international development goals, the Forum stressed the importance of using the human rights-based approach to development as the framework for implementing and evaluating MDGs as the respect, protection and promotion of indigenous peoples' rights is the key step towards the reduction of poverty in their communities.
9. A key effort promoted this year by the Forum was the holding of participatory indicator-setting workshops in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia to evolve indicators of well-being and poverty of indigenous peoples. The results of were presented to the Forum which asked for enhanced efforts of the UN-system to integrate in its work indicators relevant to indigenous peoples. We realized that the development of indicators for the MDGs which are sensitive to the realities and perspectives of indigenous peoples is crucial if we want to represent accurately how whether MDGs are achieved for indigenous peoples or not. Another thing we learned was that various Functional Commissions of the ECOSOC like the Commission on Sustainable Development had undertaken indicators work for almost 20 years and we need to learn more from their experiences. Of course, we are also aware that this is the main work of the Statistics Commission. We are communicating with the Statistics Division to help us in this work. The need for better coordination between us and the Commissions engaged in similar work especially with the Statistics Commission cannot be stressed enough.

10. Monitoring of MDG processes and the extent to which they include indigenous peoples and their issues, is considered extremely important by the Permanent Forum. Thus the Forum has welcomed reports by various parts of the UN system, including reports from UN country teams, as well as various desk reviews of its secretariat of MDG country reports, in order to ascertain the achievements and challenges to the inclusion of indigenous issues and promote solutions. Such reviews have been conducted until now of 35 MDG country reports and I would like to mention six of the conclusions and recommendations of the 2007 review:
- a. Approximately one third of the MDGRs reviewed sufficiently include indigenous peoples. Another 55% address indigenous issues to varying degrees, while the remaining 18% do not mention indigenous peoples at all.
 - b. With few exceptions, the reports were produced without any reference to input from indigenous peoples' organizations.
 - c. Reports that do address indigenous peoples tend to do so in the context of MDG 1 (poverty and nutrition), MDG 2 (education), MDG 3 (gender equality) MDG 4 (child mortality) and MDG 5 (maternal mortality). While most MDGRs state that indigenous peoples show a higher incidence of poverty, lower access to education, and are more likely to suffer from maternal and child mortality and morbidity, few reports consistently provide data to back up these statements. Although these statements are entirely true, reports show considerable gaps in available data.
 - d. Several of the reports do not specifically refer to indigenous peoples, but use regional, and rural/urban disparities to describe disproportionate development. The most marginalized regions often correspond to indigenous lands and territories, although indigenous peoples are not explicitly mentioned. Also, several reports include indigenous peoples within the grouping "vulnerable populations" (extremely poor/low-income population, rural population, indigenous and other ethnic minorities, disabled, etc.), but do not provide specific data.
 - e. Most MDGRs discuss, to varying degrees, the exclusion and disparities affecting indigenous peoples, as well as targeted interventions to address these challenges (some explicitly, others within the category of "vulnerable populations"). However, with few exceptions, very little mention is made of mechanisms through which to ensure the input and participation of indigenous peoples themselves in the design, implementation and monitoring of these policy interventions.
 - f. **Governments with indigenous peoples should incorporate the issues and challenges specifically faced by indigenous peoples directly into the framework of the MDGR by: (a) including indigenous peoples in the context of the overall report, including its planning; (b) including indigenous peoples in the context of meeting each specific goal; (c) including indigenous peoples' effective participation in the planning process of future interventions, as well as in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects that will directly or indirectly affect them; (d) improving the collection and disaggregation of data regarding indigenous peoples.**

Full employment and decent work for all

11. Decent work for indigenous peoples does not only mean formal employment but also the ensuring that their traditional livelihoods which are sustainable and viable are not destroyed because of the promotion by governments of the dominant development paradigm.
12. Indigenous peoples have been facing special challenges in terms of employment and decent work for decades. In fact, the very issue of the inhuman conditions of work of indigenous and tribal populations was what drove the ILO in the 1950s to adopt the very first ILO Convention No. 109, later revised, in 1979, by the ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Populations in Independent Countries.
13. Indigenous peoples, have suffered systematic displacement from their traditional lands and territories due to development projects, the designation of so-called protected areas or conflict, all of which having devastating effects on their livelihoods. Therefore indigenous peoples have often been obliged to seek employment by migrating within their countries or internationally, often facing extraordinary and additional challenges as indigenous persons in the new realities they find themselves in—realities that create new vulnerabilities and often an affront to the human dignity of these indigenous women, children and men who are seeking to build new lives.
14. Since its Third Session in 2004, the Permanent Forum has identified the issue of migration of indigenous people, as well as urban indigenous issues as specially challenging and in need of study and public policy action. In cooperation with the International Organization on Migration, UN-HABITAT, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Economic Commission for Latin America and others, the Forum has organized two specific international expert meetings to start addressing these issues, which are directly linked to employment and decent work. It is in the same spirit, that the Forum participated last year in the General Assembly's High Level Dialogue on Migration.
15. The Forum believes that a lot of analytical and research work is still needed in this area so that informed and effective policies and programmes can be established and the Forum intends to continue its efforts to mobilize all relevant actors. This year, in addressing urban indigenous issues, the Forum recommended, among other things, that States, in order to combat the adverse effects of migration, cooperate with indigenous peoples to provide employment and economic development opportunities within their territories.
16. Mr. President, your Excellencies, as you all know the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will be considered before the 61st Session of the General Assembly ends in September this year. The Declaration contains a lot of reference to the issues we are discussing here. On the issue of decent work alone we have Articles 17, 20 and 21 addressing this. I therefore like to take this opportunity to appeal to all of you to vote for adoption of this Declaration when it comes before the General Assembly. This Declaration will be a basic

guiding framework which can enhance further the coordination between the different Functional Commissions.

17. In closing, let me reiterate our full support for your efforts towards the continuing strengthening of coordination and cooperation among functional commissions. As discussed with you in January this year, the Council could identify an issue annually to which all functional commissions should be invited to contribute from the angle of their own mandates; this input of the commissions would then be a good contribution to the Council's discussion of that particular issue. In order for such preparation to be possible, the Council could announce the special issue in due time for all commissions to be able to contribute.
18. As we try to build the “One UN” together, I am heartened to recall the World Summit’s commitment to the sustainable development of indigenous peoples and their communities as “crucial in our fight against hunger and poverty” and the world leaders’ call “to adequately and urgently address food security and rural and agricultural development” in indigenous and local communities.
19. The special theme of the Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People –which in fact coincides with the timeframe of the MDGs—is “Partnership for action and dignity”. And the objectives of the Decade include the promotion of development with identity-development with culture.
20. The Permanent Forum on indigenous Issues continues to strive towards the full implementation of its mandate to end marginalization, exclusion, and poverty in the lives of the world’s indigenous peoples, and is pursuing this with the partnership and support of the Economic and Social Council, its functional commissions, Member States, the UN system and indigenous peoples themselves.

Thank you, Mr. President.