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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Sixth Session
6th & 7th Meetings (AM & PM)

INDIGENOUS FORUM DISCUSSES WAYS GLOBAL ANTI-POVERTY GOALS CAN BETTER REFLECT

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF NATIVE, TRIBAL PEOPLES

As the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues today began consideration of how global efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals could better reflect the unique socio-economic interests of native and tribal peoples, representatives of indigenous organizations and traditional bodies within national Governments argued for, among other measures, creating more accurate census records and stepping up efforts to preserve endangered traditional languages.

The Millennium Goals summarize development priorities agreed at international conferences and summits during the 1990s. At the end of the last century, world leaders distilled the key objectives in the Millennium Declaration, agreeing to a set of targets to reduce global poverty, turn back the ravages of HIV/AIDS and improve living standards, all by 2015. The Forum chose "Indigenous Peoples and the Millennium Development Goals" as a special theme of its fourth session, and held that the indicators of achieving the Goals must be reviewed in six areas most critical to indigenous peoples' well-being: economic and social development, the environment, human rights, education and health care.

As part of the Forum's work in economic and social development, Chairperson Victoria Tauli-Corpuz from the Philippines, presented a study on "Oil Palm and Other Commercial Tree Plantations, Monocropping and the Impacts on Indigenous Peoples' Land Tenure and Resource Management Systems and Livelihoods". Ms. Tauli-Corpuz and Forum expert Parshuram Tamang from Nepal had served as Special Rapporteurs in gathering the information.

She said large-scale plantation economies formed part of the story of the erosion and expropriation of indigenous peoples' lands and territories, and the alteration of their communal land tenure and resource management systems. Social conflicts associated with large-scale industrial logging and monocrop plantations basically represented a conflict between indigenous peoples and States over who had the right to own, use and manage forests.

She said oil palm could be harvested in an environmentally friendly way, as it had been in Africa with small-scale planters. In the name of bigger profits, however, States, corporations and private banks supported and promoted large-scale expansion of those plantations, despite adverse impacts on native peoples and the environment. Further, demand for biofuels provided new incentives for expanding oil palm plantations. She added that it was a classic example of how solutions to one problem had created a host of others. Among her recommendations, she encouraged the Forum to submit a report on the "Impacts of Climate Change Mitigation Measures on Indigenous Peoples" at the next conference of States parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Taking the floor after her, a representative of the Consejo de Desarrollo of Ecuador suggested that national development policies needed mechanisms that reached the most vulnerable populations. Bilingual programmes should be expanded and institutions involved in census data collection should record accurate numbers of indigenous people. Contrary to Ecuador's census that showed indigenous peoples representing about

7 per cent of the population, she said native peoples numbered between 35 and 45 per cent of the population. "We're not just the tiny minorities they say we are."

On the interrelated issues of culture and education in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, the Director of Policy, Te Puni Kokiri, New Zealand, said her country had undergone a profound transformation in order to address the rights and needs of its indigenous peoples, particularly in protecting Te Reo Maori, the Maori language. New Zealand believed that the growth of language was fundamental to the well-being of Maori as a community and as individuals, she said, noting that the Government also believed that the Maori language was a national cultural treasure. Maori had been an official language since 1987, and Te Reo had flourished through subsequent efforts to promote it. It was essential that the United Nations system be sensitized to the importance of indigenous culture and engaged at the country level in promoting the use of indigenous languages.

Regarding the issue of culture, a speaker presenting a joint statement from the Hmong People's Congress and the Hmong Chaofa Federated State said that her people had long been abused, discriminated against and displaced by the Lao People's Democratic Republic Government. Likening the situation to the current conditions in the Sudan's strife-torn western Darfur region, she said the Lao People's Democratic Republic Government continued to hunt and displace the Hmong people, and to place land mines in Hmong agricultural fields and along traditional paths and passageways. The Hmong people had been using the forests for survival for years. They were not violent people, but were being subjected to ongoing persecution at the hands of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. She urged the Forum to call on that Government to live up to its obligations under international law.

Describing the dire situation of her people, the Chief of the Winnewen Winto Tribe, said only 125 members of her tribe remained, as a result of colonial policies that had begun with the California gold rush during the 1800s. Her people were on the brink of extinction, because their region was filled with "blue gold" -- water. She denounced the spiritual and ecological damage being done to the lands in the western United States in the name of "development". The United States Government continued to undermine the land rights of the Winnewen Winto, and the situation would worsen, as California's water needs grew and as dams along the McLeod River were raised, causing flooding in the valleys below.

Government representatives of Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru and Mexico also made statements today.

Representatives of the following organizations, conventions and funds also spoke: International Labour Organization (ILO); Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO); and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Statements were also made by representatives of the following indigenous organizations: Indigenous Peoples' Autonomy and Development; Arid Lands Institute; Tebtebba Philippines, Asia and Global Report; Inuit Circumpolar Council/Arctic Regional Caucus; Global Conference on Global Indicators for Food Security; National Native Title Council; Indigenous Youth Caucus; Kouto Nui of the Cook Islands and other indigenous peoples of Polynesian small island developing States; Caribbean Antilles Indigenous Peoples Caucus and the Diaspora; Community Action and Research for Development; Turaga Indigenous Nation; Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN); Council of Yukagir Elders; International Indian Treaty Council (REDOIL); National Native Title Council; North American Regional Caucus; Seventh Generation Fund; Indigenous Information Centre of the Krasnoyarsk Territory; Khmer Kampuchea Krom Federation and the Montagnard Foundation; Consultoria de los Pueblos Indigenas en el Norte del Mexico; Indigenous Women's Caucus; Indigenous World Association; North America Regional Caucus; Colombian Indigenous Organizations; and Coordination Autochtone Francophone.

The Permanent Forum will reconvene at 10 a.m. Friday, 18 May, to continue its consideration of implementing its recommendations on the Millennium Development Goals, and to hear a working paper by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples.

Background

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues met today to continue its sixth annual session. It was expected to discuss implementation of recommendations on the six mandated areas (economic and social development, environment, health, education, culture and human rights) and on the Millennium

Development Goals. The session, which runs through 25 May, was also expected to examine urban indigenous peoples and migration, indigenous peoples in Asia and data collection and disaggregation. For background, see Press Release [HR/4916](#) issued 11 May 2007.

Statements

The Forum began its work this morning hearing from Chairperson VICTORIA TAULI-CORPUZ, from the Philippines, who presented a conference room paper on behalf of herself and Forum expert Parshuram Tamang from Nepal, on “Oil Palm and Other Commercial Tree Plantations, Monocropping and the Impacts on Indigenous Peoples’ Land Tenure and Resource Management Systems and Livelihoods” (document E/C.19/2007/CRP.6).

She said social conflicts associated with large-scale industrial logging and monocrop plantations basically represented a conflict between indigenous peoples and States over who had the right to own, use and manage forests. Land rights remained one of the most violated rights of indigenous peoples, she said, highlighting the two reports by Erica-Irene Daes of Greece and of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples. In the 1980s, multilateral financial institutions had facilitated the conversion of forests into industrial plantations. The Tropical Forestry Action Plan, conceived by the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Resources Institute were designed to meet the demand for wood products.

The lack of understanding of the holistic world views of indigenous peoples was an exacerbating factor for deforestation, she said. Oil palm, a native plant of West Africa, had been traditionally used as food and medicine and could be harvested in an environmentally friendly manner. Today, however, States and the private sector supported large-scale agro-industrial models that provided large profits to international plantation owners. Those profits were ensured by cheap labour.

Demand for biofuels provided new incentives for further expansion of oil palm plantations, she said, and the recommendations adopted by the Climate Change Convention were a classic case of how solutions to one problem created a host of others. The most logical approach to halt CO₂ emissions was for countries, especially industrialized countries, to cut fossil fuel consumption. Those countries had been targeted because of their “carbon debt” owed to the South, which had yet to be paid, she said, adding that the United States, with less than 5 per cent of the global population, was responsible for 30 per cent of the cumulative greenhouse gas emissions between 1950 and 1986, whereas India, with 17 per cent of the population, contributed only 2 per cent.

Now, in the name of saving the world from global warming, native lands were being viewed as a means of finding solutions, she added, stressing that the expansion of plantations for biofuels and carbon sinks were exacerbating earlier problems. There were some positive developments in recognizing traditional rights. However, the eviction of indigenous peoples from their forests continued unabated and policies that reinforced the neo-liberal economic development model were still trumping those protecting indigenous peoples’ rights to their lands. Funding to improve the capacity of countries to implement national laws that respected native rights to lands remained “woefully inadequate”.

She said there was a growing body of jurisprudence developed by intergovernmental bodies that reinforced the need for protecting indigenous peoples’ rights to their lands, and their report to exercise self-determination and free, prior and informed consent. Indigenous peoples were also seeking redress through the courts for the unjust expropriation of their lands.

Among her recommendations, she said the Forum report should be disseminated for comment and additional data to indigenous peoples, United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations, among others. With that information, the Forum could analyse practices of corporations, States and international bodies relating to monocrop plantations, logging, carbon sinks and carbon emission trading. Further, the Forum should prepare a report on the “Impacts of Climate Change Mitigation Measures on Indigenous Peoples”, which could be submitted at the next Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

VALENTIN TINCONA, Vice-Minister of Communitarian Justice of Bolivia, said that, when looking at implementation of internationally-agreed development goals, it was important to consider “community justice” or indigenous justice systems. Such systems were rich in tradition and could help change national-level judicial structures for the better. They were important because, in many countries like Bolivia, indigenous people and other marginalized groups felt that justice and access to judicial mechanisms was only for the rich. Indigenous authorities in community-level justice structures were better placed to adjudicate matters and disputes among their own people, if only because they could do so in the common language of a particular group. There was a real change afoot in Bolivia, however, and President Evo Morales’ Government was looking into normalizing such indigenous justice structures.

Making a brief statement on some of the submissions by some United Nations agencies on today’s discussion, PARSHURAM TAMANG, expert from Nepal, noted that there were some disturbing discrepancies in terminology, particularly regarding the agreed definition of “forests” and “plantations”, which could have a serious impact on the lives and livelihoods of indigenous peoples.

JORGE SKINNER-KLÉE (Guatemala) said that indigenous peoples worldwide had been denied their fundamental rights for centuries. Respect for those rights was necessary if racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia were to be eradicated. Guatemala was committed to ensuring that indigenous people could freely exercise their rights. It was vital for all the world’s people “to be called by their own name”, to freely express their diversity and to participate actively in the societies and communities in which they lived.

With all that in mind, he called on all States to move for the speedy adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He stressed that the non-binding Declaration did not impose new rights; it merely ensured the participation of long-marginalized and ignored indigenous people in their societies. He also urged States not to look at the Declaration only in terms of self-determination, which shifted the focus away from human rights and into the realm of political issues.

On the interrelated issues of culture and education in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, DONNA MATAHAERE-ATARIKI, Director of Policy, Te Puni Kokiri, New Zealand, said that her country had undergone a profound transformation in order to address the rights and needs of its indigenous peoples, in particular, the protection of te Reo Maori, the Maori language. New Zealand believed that the growth and use of language was fundamental to the well-being of Maori as a community and as individuals. At the same time, the Government believed that the Maori language was a national cultural treasure, which made New Zealand and New Zealanders unique. She added that Maori had been an official language since 1987, and te Reo had flourished through subsequent efforts to promote it.

She said the country would shortly celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the te Kohanga Reo movement, Maori language early childhood learning, largely driven by Maori women leaders, in partnership with the Government. Finally, she said that New Zealand supported the Permanent Forum’s work promoting education for indigenous children in their own language and supported, as well, calls for the relevant parts of the United Nations system to properly address the issue in the context of the Millennium Development Goals on primary education. Moreover, it was essential that the United Nations system be sensitized to the importance of indigenous culture, and engaged at the country level in ways to promote the continued use of indigenous languages.

LOURDES TIBAN, Executive Secretary of Consejo de Desarrollo de Ecuador, recalling her ordeal to become an accredited participant in the Forum’s session while wearing her hat, a symbol of her identity, thanked the Forum for helping her “return her rights”. The wearing of her hat during her accreditation process had set a historic precedent at the United Nations, which hopefully ensured that discrimination over her cultural expression would never again be perpetuated. “This is one indigenous woman who has striven to respect symbols of cultural identity,” she said. The Forum should adopt a recommendation supporting policies that would respect indigenous peoples’ rights to wear symbols of their identity.

On the implementation of the recommendations in the six mandated areas, she suggested national development policies needed mechanisms that reached the most vulnerable sections of populations. In a 2006 report on the Millennium Development Goals, there was no reference to indigenous peoples. Ecuador, despite limited financial resources allocated to indigenous issues, was trying to work on the basic services including education, infrastructure and better economic systems for economic development. Citing the Special Rapporteur’s observation of the “meagre financing” given to indigenous institutions in Ecuador, she called for

bilingual programmes, among others, to be expanded. Moreover, institutions involved in censuses should ensure that the proper numbers of indigenous peoples were recorded.

According to Ecuador's census, indigenous peoples represented about 7 per cent of the population, she said. In the streets, however, "we can bring the whole country to a stop", with native peoples numbering between 35 and 45 per cent of the total population. "We're not just the tiny minorities they say we are." Recommendations of earlier sessions by the Special Rapporteur should be updated to benefit indigenous groups, she added, and the Declaration should be adopted as soon as possible.

CARLOS CANEPA, President of the Commission on Indigenous Amazonian and Afro-Peruvian issues of the Peruvian Congress in Peru, said there were 5,818 rural communities in his country. His commission had been doing intensive work to present a draft law on indigenous peoples and had held workshops with all those involved in defence of the rights of indigenous communities. It was hoped that the pre-draft would modernize laws that dated back to the 1980s, and broaden the rights of rural and native communities.

Collective rights for communities that had their own culture, aboriginal language and relationship with the State, including those in voluntary isolation, were being developed, he added, highlighting rights to intellectual property, and those relating to property and income. According to the existing Constitution, land ownership was inalienable and natural resources were the patrimony of the nation. Norms had been established for their use, making it possible to enter into partnership with corporations. Further, any development process was based on the principle of sustainable development, with community rights to be enhanced. He asked the Forum to call upon the General Assembly to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

ENRIQUE OCHOA, First Secretary of Mexico, said the process of adopting the Declaration in the General Assembly had unfortunately been stalled. The Declaration, like other documents, could be perfected. His delegation was convinced, however, that the current draft was the best outcome of a long process of negotiations, which themselves had held historic value. The text should remain intact. That was why Mexico, with 67 other countries, had presented to the General Assembly President an approach that would make it possible to adopt the Declaration without amendment. His delegation was open to a sincere dialogue with all delegations who sought a solution in good faith to that impasse. That was part of the historic debt that the United Nations system and States owed to indigenous peoples.

On economic and social development and human rights targets, FRANCESCA THORNBERRY, Project Coordinator, International Labour Organization (ILO), said that, without international and national legal policies that addressed the concerns of indigenous peoples, they could not achieve economic and social development. She said that the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers process should include development initiatives specifically targeted to indigenous communities, particularly because, even though research had shown that indigenous people generally lived in worse conditions than other citizens, their concerns were very rarely integrated into such strategies.

The ILO had found that, despite varying degrees of knowledge about the rights of indigenous peoples, very little action had been taken to protect and promote them. She said that it was also important to recognize that indigenous peoples themselves had been found to have very little knowledge of the Millennium Development Goals or any other globally agreed development initiatives. On human rights, she said that the ILO had launched several projects on the African continent focused chiefly on "issues rather than on definitions". The ILO had also launched several projects to enhance capacity-building among indigenous communities.

JOHN SCOTT, speaking on behalf of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, presented that panel's report and recommendations to the Forum. He noted that article 8(J) of the Convention focused specifically on respecting, preserving, and maintaining traditional knowledge and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of such knowledge. He said that a working group of parties to the Convention on article 8(J) had been established to provide advice to the parties on implementation efforts. The working group had met four times, thus far, and its fifth meeting would occur immediately following the next meeting of the working group on access and benefit sharing in mid-October.

Turning next to the most recent meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held this past March, he said that, among other things, some of the participants had noted with concern that local communities in the Arctic, small islands and high altitudes, were highly vulnerable to climate change and, in

fact, were struggling to deal with the accelerated impact of global warming in their respective regions. In response, the Convention's Executive-Secretary had initiated what was believed to be a groundbreaking report on indigenous and local communities highly vulnerable to climate change focusing on causes and solutions. That report was expected to be launched on 22 May, the International Day of Biological Diversity.

On the Conference's recommendations to the Permanent Forum, he said that the parties invited the Forum to support and collaborate with the working group on article 8(J) and the indicators initiative of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity to organize an expert seminar on indicators relevant for indigenous and local communities in support of the Convention's Strategic Plan. That includes the 2010 target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss in the Millennium Development Goals.

ROCIO ROJAS, Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), said that health was synonymous with a harmonious life with the natural and spiritual environment. That was why the alarming inequities in health -- including access to health facilities and education about medicines and treatment -- in indigenous communities and territories were completely unacceptable. Indigenous people faced disproportionately high maternal and child mortality rates, among other serious issues. She said that PAHO had stepped up its efforts to address serious health concerns in line with initiatives to attain the Millennium Development Goals. There was a particular need to focus on indigenous children, women and older women, she said, because they were essentially a marginalized group within a marginalized group.

A representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said the Fund had applied a culturally sensitive approach over the last five years for promoting development efforts, and saw work with indigenous peoples as part of its broader work of social inclusion and protecting human rights. She highlighted lessons learned that were critical for achieving the Millennium development Goals and the Programme of Action of Indigenous Peoples. The link between land rights, migration and sexual health issues must be recognized. In that context, she noted increased sexual violence and exposure to HIV/AIDS. The Fund was boosting its work with organizations that recognized the need for reproductive health services to cut maternal morbidity rates and HIV/AIDS infection.

Highlighting work to increase partnerships with indigenous leaders to create culturally sensitive strategies to promote equality for indigenous women, she said the Fund also was carrying out regional workshops in Asia and Latin America to ensure data on indigenous people was included in the 2010 population and houses census.

A representative of the Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Autonomy and Development, recalling the recent expert meeting held in Nicaragua, said experts had addressed the challenge of overcoming the invisibility of indigenous peoples, and that indicators were being created to measure the well-being of peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean. The concept of well-being was related to spiritual health, access to education and existing resources, she continued, as well as to the fair and equitable distribution of profits derived from native lands.

Well-being indicators should incorporate collective values, and focus on both the level of recognition and the exercise of rights among native peoples, she added, noting that adoption of the Declaration would be helpful in that regard. Moreover, she recommended creating other indicators, including structural indicators (on lands territories and natural resources and self-determination, for example); and those pertaining to the exercise of recognition of rights (including models of autonomy and self-government). She also recommended short-term themes to maximize the use of data in countries already incorporating the "ethnic element", for example. In the medium-term, a focus on human and collective rights was needed.

The representative of the Arid Lands Institute said a conference on well-being indicators in Africa held last November 2006 included 24 participants from five African regions. Participants discussed what the concept of well-being really meant, and aired concerns about strikingly decreased access to food -- including forest resource-based food such as honey and nuts -- to grazing rights, water and salts. They concluded that indigenous peoples were, in fact, "less better off" than in the past. Further, the loss of indigenous knowledge and languages through the development process was alarming. Mother tongue languages were not being supported by State structures, and access to health, education and infrastructure services were diminishing. On mining, participants agreed indigenous peoples were being displaced without their prior and informed consent, and requested the United Nations to ensure that principle. Further, could something be done to help pastoralists maintain access to their lands?

A representative of the Tebtebba Philippines, Asia and Global Report speaking on indicators relevant for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, discussed the need to develop guidelines in the Asian region to ensure culturally sensitive survey instruments, welcoming training for the 2010 census.

Reporting on a recent international seminar on the Convention on Biological Diversity, she said recommendations were developed on increasing the participation of indigenous peoples to that Convention and indicators proposed to protect traditional knowledge. Results would be considered in October this year. The Convention on Biological Diversity indicators, if adopted, would help understand current practices and trends covered by the Convention.

She said the ILO had been asked to collect information on the practice of traditional occupations. In preparing for the international experts' seminar, her organization had developed 12 global core themes related to the concept of well-being, including: security of rights to lands, territories and national resources; integrity of indigenous culture and heritage; respect for non-discrimination; self-determination; free, prior and informed consent; health; access to infrastructure and basic services; and the gender dimensions and demographic patterns of indigenous peoples. She recommended that, during the sixth session, Forum representatives identify the most productive steps to carry forward work on indicators.

PATRICIA COCHRAN, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, speaking on behalf of the Arctic Caucus, said that the Inuit, like the Sami and other indigenous people, had relied on their own educations for thousands of years. They passed on knowledge through reflection, detailed observation of the environment and a detailed understanding of family structures. She was not sure if the learning process had ever been called "education" as such, and the term "traditional knowledge" was too imprecise. In any case, indigenous people should be included in any national decision-making in the area of education. The Arctic Caucus called in the Forum to, among other things, promote cultural identity learning and education, and to ensure that national education strategies integrated traditional cultures and languages.

A representative speaking on behalf of the Global Conference on Global Indicators for Food Security said that the global consultation had consolidated the indicators last year, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Some 20 indigenous experts from six regions, as well as representatives of United Nations agencies, had participated. The indicators were intended to be used as tools by the United Nations and indigenous agencies in their efforts to address food security concerns. They were in the process of field testing the indicators and would report to the Forum's next session on the outcome. Participants had affirmed, among other things, that food sovereignty for indigenous peoples was based on the right of self-determination, and was inextricably linked to their right of equitable access to and management of their traditional lands.

DEA THIELE, speaking on behalf of the National Native Title Council and associated Australian indigenous groups, said that the native peoples of Australia were concerned at the lack of indigenous participation in the wider global effort to attain the Millennium Development Goals and wholeheartedly supported the Forum's decision to focus on the matter during this session. She said that the Australian Government arrogantly seemed to view the Goals only as a matter of foreign policy. That Government barely recognized the property rights and other fundamental rights of indigenous people and must do more to help build capacity in indigenous communities, so Aboriginal and other people could take ownership of development decision-making processes. She urged the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide a report on indigenous people's health to the next session of the Forum, and that the Forum promote the establishment of a global research initiative that would collect data and information on efforts under way to assist indigenous peoples in attaining the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

MYRON LAYMON, speaking on behalf of the Indigenous Youth Caucus, said that indigenous youth made up about half the population of native peoples worldwide. She urged the Forum experts and United Nations Member States to move beyond rhetoric and seriously consider the effects their actions today would have on future generations, particularly towards sustaining the unique and sacred values of the world's indigenous peoples. She also urged the Forum to firmly state that it was necessary for Governments to address the decades of wrongs done to indigenous people and to take concrete efforts to rectify those wrongs, particularly regarding access to and sustainable management of communal land and water resources. She called on the Forum to help rally huge groups of indigenous youth to raise awareness about the moral and ethical imperatives of addressing the legitimate concerns of the world's native peoples.

IMOGENE PAU INGRAM, speaking on behalf of the Kouto Nui of the Cook Islands and other indigenous peoples of Polynesian small island developing States, said that other speakers from her region would address the effects of climate change, so she would confine her statement to the contamination of Pacific waters through waste and trans-shipment of toxic chemicals. Among other things, she drew attention to the troubling practice of the selling by large countries of banned pesticide stockpiles and toxic wastes to developing countries for either use or disposal. Trafficking in banned pesticides was becoming a common practice, she added, pleading with her indigenous brothers and sisters to consider their own futures and learn more about the consequences of the invisible threat. She also encouraged native peoples and continental States alike to stop using agrichemicals and switch to more modern organic farming methods.

ALBERT DETERVILLE, on behalf of the Caribbean Antilles Indigenous Peoples Caucus and the Diaspora, briefly presented some of his group's recommendations to the Forum, including that the Forum press States to step up efforts to address the serious problem of hypertension in the Caribbean Islands. He also called for greater efforts to ensure that culturally appropriate subjects that would involve indigenous issues be integrated into educational programmes in the region and worldwide.

SUMSHOT KHULAR, speaking on behalf of the Community Action and Research for Development said that most of the Governments in her region consistently implemented development programmes and policies that undermined traditional land management structures and threatened communal land, water and air resources. Those policies were bound to affect the health situation of indigenous people in the region. Market and military activity was also having a deleterious affect on agriculture, fishing and herding. Indeed, research had revealed, among other things, a disturbingly high suicide rate among farmers, and that traditional community-level markets were shrinking to dangerously low levels.

She called on the Forum to pressure Governments in the south-central Asian region to recognize the social political and cultural rights of indigenous peoples and to recognize that those rights should be protected and promoted for native peoples living in remote border areas or high altitudes. Many Governments considered those areas outside their jurisdiction when it came to assistance, but not when exploiting the natural resources that could be found there. She also called for an end to military build-up in the region.

HILDA LINI, delivering the collective statement by the Turaga Indigenous Nation, said Vanuatu was looking at the Millennium Development Goals and poverty eradication, but which models should be used to ensure the well-being of future generations? The Western economic system was a "criminal system" that had robbed people of their health and survival. She encouraged indigenous tribes to research their own economic system, which was based on the principle of peaceful coexistence. Further, she urged "MDG perpetrators" and the United Nations development agencies to organize workshops geared towards finding environmentally friendly economic models.

She believed in an economic model that fostered peaceful coexistence within families and tribes. Collective rights and freedoms were prominent values and people were in control of their daily lives. Her Government, by recognizing the indigenous economic system, had declared 2007 the Year of the Indigenous Economic System. Moreover, the Happy Planet Index, created by United Kingdom-based economists to measure how efficient countries were in delivering human well-being, had rated Vanuatu first on its list of 178 countries, as the country was dependent on an indigenous system of land administration and its own philosophies of life.

The representative of Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN), discussing oil palm plantations and monocropping, asked the Forum to recommend that the Convention on Biological Diversity include those issues, and evaluate the impact of plantation expansion on traditional knowledge. Also, the Forum should recommend that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change create an indigenous peoples' expert group to study those issues. Further, the impact of climate change mitigation strategies on indigenous peoples should be studied. She urged the Forum to recommend to the Human Rights Council that a group addressing the human rights of indigenous peoples be created and that human rights violations caused by the destruction of territories be studied.

The representative of the Council of Yukagir Elders said her people were ancient circumpolar peoples living in the northern area of the Russian Federation who subsisted on fishing, hunting and gathering. However, they had not been able to engage in those activities, due in part to the negative impacts of climate change. Youth no longer wished to engage in local activities, with many suffering from alcoholism and taking part in criminal

activities. The Yukagir wished to set up joint bodies with counsellors to solve those problems. Despite assistance from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the number of people who spoke their language was dwindling.

The representative of the International Indian Treaty Council (REDOIL) said lands had been illegally claimed by the Russian Federation and then sold to the United States in 1867. Since that time, the United States had broken every treaty made with indigenous nations to avoid sovereign recognition of those peoples over their lands. The discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay had only promoted the combined interests of companies and the United States Government. Unilateral congressional passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971 had legitimized United States ownership over indigenous lands and resources, and lands taken had become corporate assets. That legislation had changed the dynamics of how Alaska natives related to the land and to one another. He asked the Forum to include language in the text of its report that would call attention to the taking of indigenous land in Alaska, which had had an impact on peoples' rights to maintain traditional economies. Further, he recommended that article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights be implemented by States.

The representative delivering a joint statement by the National Native Title Council and associated organizations said that, although the Australian Government was a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals, insufficient attention had been paid to the health of indigenous Australians. One of the main issues diverting success was the mistaken belief that no amount of spending would improve their health. Despite a record budget surplus, few funds had been allocated to alleviate that situation. In the 2001-2002 period, indigenous peoples' access to primary health care medicines had been one third that of other Australians. He asked the Forum to push States to implement measures that would recognize indigenous peoples' right to health, among other issues.

Chief EDWARD JOHN, speaking on behalf of the North American Regional Caucus, called on the General Assembly to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples immediately and not to change any of the language that was present in the document when it was adopted last year by the Human Rights Council. That was an important point, because there were many who wished to "replace the heart of the Declaration -- the explicitly stated principle that all indigenous people have the rights to self-determination -- with an artificial pump".

A representative speaking on behalf of the Seventh Generation Fund and a collective of Zuni and other Native American organizations, called for the creation of a Special Rapporteur for the protection of water and water catchments areas, to specifically study the impact of dams and, among other things, the health impact of water-allocation and -access policies.

EVGENIA SHUSTOVA, in a joint statement on behalf of Indigenous Information Centre of the Krasnoyarsk Territory and a collective of indigenous groups from the Russian Federation, emphasized the importance of protecting endangered traditional languages in her region. She said that excluding the languages of indigenous peoples from educational curricula was a violation of their rights. She called on the Forum to step up its efforts to monitor the teaching of indigenous languages.

A speaker presenting a joint statement from the Hmong People's Congress and the Hmong Chaofa Federated State said that her people had long been abused, discriminated against and displaced by the Lao People's Democratic Republic Government. The Government had been engaged in an ongoing campaign of abuse, including grave sex crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, which the international community had consistently failed to address.

Likening the situation to the current conditions in the Sudan's strife-torn western Darfur region, she said the Lao People's Democratic Republic Government continued to hunt and displace the Hmong people, and to place land mines in Hmong agricultural fields and along traditional paths and passageways. The Hmong people had been using the forests for survival for years. They were not violent people, but were being subjected to ongoing persecution at the hands of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. She urged the Forum to call on that Government to live up to its obligations under international law.

Chief COLLEEN SISK, Winnewen Winto Tribe, said only 125 members of her tribe remained as a result of colonial policies that had begun with the California gold rush during the 1800s. Her people were on the brink of extinction, because the region in which they lived was filled with "blue gold" -- water. She denounced

the spiritual and ecological damage that was being done to the lands in the name of “development” in the western part of the United States. The United States Government continued to undermine the land rights of the Winnewen Winto. She said the situation would get even worse, as California’s water needs grew and as dams along the McLeod River were raised, causing flooding in the valleys below.

Delivering a joint statement on behalf of the Khmer Kampuchea Krom Federation and the Montagnard Foundation, a speaker said the Vietnamese Government did not recognize her association’s people as “indigenous people”, simply as an ethnic minority group. That could be rectified by adopting the Declaration, as, only by taking steps to restore historic damage, could there be effective means to implement the Millennium Development Goals. She said programmes targeting indigenous peoples should be built into the five-year socio-economic plan, and an awareness-campaign in the Khmer language should be launched to raise awareness about the Goals. She also urged the United Nations to encourage Viet Nam to adopt International Labour Organization Convention 169. While the country had experienced strong economic growth, people living the mountains and the Mekong Delta region did not partake in that progress, and she was concerned that the Goals would not be met in those areas.

PATRICIA RIVERA, representing the Consultoria de los Pueblos Indigenas en el Norte del Mexico, said the first indigenous crafts fair would be held in Baja California, Mexico, in August. Indigenous women carried their history and lamented the abandonment of their peoples. That was their song, their hope for the future. Accordingly, they would sing their song for the three days and nights of the fair. She called on all women craftspeople to make their stories heard, as they were the ones who conveyed the spiritual cosmic vision of their peoples. She hoped the Forum would make a recommendation on that issue. She then turned the microphone over to a government representative of Baja California, Mexico, who ensured government support for the fair’s success.

The representative of the Indigenous Women’s Caucus said economic and social development was a concern for indigenous women and their families. To fully promote development, indigenous peoples must maintain the rights to their economic and social institutions, as provided for under article 21 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Unfortunately, many traditional practices had been thwarted by corporations, and women were the first to feel the effects of that, particularly relating to their reproductive health. She stressed that efforts by States, the United Nations and others must include the equal participation of indigenous women in all areas. She further urged States to support the immediate adoption of the Declaration, as adopted by the Human Rights Council.

The representative of the Indigenous World Association and affiliate organizations, called on the Forum to adopt recommendations contained in conference room paper 6, highlighting the importance of paragraphs 67 and 68 dealing with the monitoring of private-sector policies related to logging. United States policies on ethanol production for genetically modified crops were supporting the restoration of the colonial era on sugar plantations. She asked the Forum to study best practices on the sustainable use of lands, territories and natural resources.

The representative of the North America Regional Caucus, describing a preparatory meeting held at the University of Minnesota, said participants had affirmed that food security and food sovereignty represented indigenous peoples’ survival and relationship with the natural environment. They supported the definition of food sovereignty as the right of peoples to define their own policies for the production of food according to their own practices. Participants were concerned at the devastating effects of mining and other imposed development activities on their lands, especially the reactivation of uranium mining, clear-cutting and toxic contamination of waters. On issues relating to lands, territories and natural resources, there must be free, prior and informed consent on any potential development, including uranium mining and the appropriation of water. She asked the Forum to monitor human rights violations of indigenous peoples in North America, and called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to present the results of its study to the seventh session.

Another representative of the Indigenous Women’s Caucus said various factors contributed to the poor health and malnutrition of women, especially Government policies that forced people to live in abject poverty. Policies should be inclusive and fair in the distribution of assets, she said, requesting an end to violence that brought about enforced displacement. The violation of indigenous communities’ rights to self-determination had led to the creation of health systems that were not their own. Traditional health practices should be respected as

ancestral heritage. Further, she recommended that intercultural health systems be created and that the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) work in an intercultural manner.

LIZARDO DOMICO, on behalf of Colombian Indigenous Organizations (ONICO), described in harrowing detail the treatment of indigenous people in his country. He requested the Forum to urge the Colombian Government to ensure the livelihoods of the indigenous people in the country.

MOHAMED HANDAINE, speaking on behalf of the Coordination Autochtone Francophone, 50 organizations from French-speaking countries on five continents, said that he had had great difficulty communicating with the Forum and the wider United Nations, because so little French was used. He called for the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as soon as possible. He also called for the various human rights experts and Special Rapporteurs to visit French-speaking regions in Africa and other countries, in order to ensure that the human rights of indigenous people were being respected.

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