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NOTE: FOLLOWING ARE SUMMARIES OF STATEMENTS MADE TODAY TO THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES. A COMPLETE SUMMARY OF TODAY'S FORUM MEETINGS WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF THE AFTERNOON MEETING AS PRESS RELEASE HR/4948.

Background

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues continued its seventh annual session today, with a focus on: climate change; implementation of recommendations on the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum and on the Millennium Development Goals (economic and social development, environment, health, education, culture and human rights); and indigenous languages. (For background, see Press Releases [HR/4943](#) issued 18 April and [HR/4944](#) issued 21 April.)

Dialogue with Governments

LLOYD BUSHEY ([Nicaragua](#)), a member of the indigenous Mesquite tribe, said his people had always lived in harmony with Earth. Plundering by invaders had led to climate change. How did that affect indigenous peoples? The industrialized countries had caused the changes that had impacted the Earth in a way that led to extreme poverty. Above and beyond celebrating the significant step of getting the Declaration adopted after 20 years of negotiation, there was the question of how to implement it. The States of his region had submitted and would continue to submit resolutions in the General Assembly that would form the basis for implementation at the legislative level.

At the national level, he said an office had been set up to monitor implementation and bridge the gap between people that had resulted from the savage destruction of the natural balance between indigenous peoples and the Earth. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, however, was impaired by certain policies. The Heads of Government in the region would be meeting in a few days to address the question of food security. Protection of the earth would be taken into consideration, with an emphasis on organic solutions and practices. The international community should show leadership in helping the region's indigenous peoples preserve the environment the imperialistic people had damaged. Capitalism must give way to a more cooperative relationship between humanity and Mother Earth.

TAKASHI ASHIKI ([Japan](#)) said since the effects of climate change were already beginning to be apparent, prompt and worldwide action was needed. Choosing climate change as a special theme had been an appropriate choice for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. But, if the world was to make headway on the issue, it must create an international scheme that would apply after the year 2013, and one in which all major emitting countries would participate. It was for that reason that Japan announced "Cool Earth 50" and the "Cool Earth Promotion Programme" as effective contributions to the establishment of such a scheme. In July, when it would go on to host the Hokkaido Toyako Summit, the Government hoped and expected to achieve an outcome to promote negotiations on a framework for the world in the years following 2013.

ROMAN KASHAEV ([Russian Federation](#)) said global climate change had brought about various socio-economic changes to the peoples of the far north, since their economic activities were closely connected to Arctic ecology. Given adequate international support, some indigenous peoples were able to continue living normally. But, Governments of the Arctic region needed to be more conscientious when preparing sustainable development strategies, to promote ecologically rational uses of Arctic resources.

He said current research under way in Russia, undertaken as part of the International Polar Year, focused on the impact of climate change on indigenous peoples. An important goal of that research was to improve people's living conditions in the north, and to better understand its impact on health. In 2006, the federal Government released its prognosis on climate change for 2010-2015, pinpointing means for adapting to forthcoming changes to the climate. Work was also under way to prepare a draft "climate doctrine" for the Russian Federation, and the first assessment on the impacts of climate change on the country would be ready soon. He urged the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to work closely with other intergovernmental organizations to orientate their work towards indigenous issues and to avoid overlap. The Forum should participate more in climate-related plans emanating from the Nairobi meetings. It should also lend support to scientific research being conducted on the effects of climate change on indigenous peoples.

KLEMTTI NAKKALAJARVI, President, Saami Parliament, said indigenous peoples paid a heavy toll for decisions made by the Western world -- they lost the basis for their cultures. The capacity of the Saami to tackle the challenges of climate change was limited if the Government did not give them enough power to act, even if, like many other indigenous peoples, they had adapted successfully to changes to the climate over the years. So far, they had been treated mostly as objects, rather than subjects.

He pointed to the existence of internationally agreed documents that could enable more effective participation of indigenous peoples, including the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He urged all nations to implement the commitments they had made in those documents. A "new politics" was needed at the international level, along with additional resources, to enable the world to move forward on the issue.

CLAUDIA BLUM (Colombia) said her country continued to implement policies that protected the indigenous peoples, who made up 28 per cent of the population. They were fully equal to others in the society and were accorded full constitutional rights. The Government continued to expand the scope of protections for their lands and ways of life. The Government also accorded great importance to the question of climate change and its effect on crops and the environment, which impacted greatly on the indigenous peoples, who had made a great contribution to adapting to changing conditions with their traditional ways. As far as mitigation was concerned, she said the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility should apply, based on the assumption that industrialized countries had caused the current conditions and that indigenous peoples had not contributed to the damage.

She said her country continued to introduce projects to promote conservation and reduce dependence on fuel by encouraging the broader use of biofuels. "There is no deforestation and there never will be in Colombia," she said. However, the illegal drug trade had destroyed much of the jungle. The eradication of drugs was a matter of policy. Energy and environmental promotion were part of the strategy. The Forum should recognize the importance of harnessing the synergy of the various United Nations forums to promote the welfare of indigenous peoples. For example, it should harmonize its efforts with those devoted to implementing the Convention on Biodiversity.

SIMON LEGRAND, representative of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), said his organization contributed to preserving the environment and promoting the welfare of the world's indigenous peoples. A WIPO Committee on traditional practices had been established for the exchange of information on local approaches to preserving cultures and practices. A voluntary fund had been established in 2005 to enable the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples. The next exchange of views would be held from 13 to 17 October. Switzerland, Norway, France and South Africa were major contributors, as were non-governmental organizations, such as SwedBIO/CBM and the Christensen Fund.

BARTOLOMÉ CLAVERO, member of the Permanent Forum from Spain, asked the representative of Colombia if her Government would continue to ignore the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, noting that the Government had not voted in favour of it. He recalled her statement at today's meeting that consultations with indigenous peoples in Colombia were carried out according to "national norms". As far as he knew, no consultations had been held.

He then pointed out that Colombia had ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 [relating to the rights of indigenous peoples]. What did that imply about Colombia's commitment to Convention 169, in light of its provision on free prior informed consent?

CHARLIE THACH, Khmer Kampuchea Krom Federation, said that unlike many indigenous communities in North and South America, those in Asia had not been recognized by their Governments at all. It was feared that any future work on indigenous issues at the international level would not be relevant to Asia's indigenous peoples. Taking advantage of the recent adoption of the Declaration, she sought help from the Forum and Governments to set up a deadline for countries that had not signed the Declaration to do so. She requested the Forum to help set up an open dialogue between the Khmer Kampuchea Krom community with the Government of Viet Nam, with the aim of securing proper recognition of their indigenous status and to ensure they were included in decision-making processes. She requested the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to create vocational programmes in areas where indigenous peoples lived, since there was a concern that the Millennium Development Goals of indigenous peoples would not be met.

ENRIQUE OCHOA MARTINEZ (Mexico) noted that indigenous communities depended on forestry, fishing and agriculture. They lived in a fragile ecosystem, making it essential to promote their participation in negotiations relating to climate change. The international community must study ways to bring about their effective participation in the design and development of mitigation and adaptation activities. It must study the relationship between climate change, indigenous peoples and gender equality, and how to include indigenous viewpoints when preparing national policies.

He said Mexico's national commission on the development of indigenous peoples was the main body through which indigenous peoples' issues were addressed. The law establishing that commission required the Government to consult indigenous peoples on any policies and projects that might affect them. A means for consulting indigenous peoples would be implemented in 2008. In the meantime, a study was being conducted on the effects of climate change on the environment of indigenous peoples. Information was being collected on the machinery used by indigenous peoples to mitigate the effects of climate change on their land.

MARY SIMAT, IPACC, said her group was a non-governmental organization composed of individuals from 20 countries and their aim was to promote sustainable practices, increasingly through information technologies. They worked with bodies such as the World Bank to spread information about their rights among the indigenous peoples, particularly the principle of free and prior consent. The implementation of information technologies helped disseminate the information. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) needed to work more closely with groups such as hers and there was a need to establish national working groups for advising peoples of their rights and helping them to attain them.

Implementation of Previous Recommendations

VERNON MUNOZ, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the right to education, introduced the theme of implementing recommendations. He said goals on education were lagging in many countries. Poverty was a key contributor to the situation, since many children needed to work six or more hours a day. Furthermore, the right to be educated in a mother tongue was a basic one that helped preserve the richness and diversity of cultures. More effort needed to be expended to overcome disdain for local languages and to curtail the hostilities that arose between indigenous groups as a result of the marginalization and discrimination by the population at large.

He said social homogeneity was impossible. The concept of a delineated and autonomous state was incompatible with the indigenous peoples' concept of "belonging". The knowledge of the indigenous peoples must be recognized as a valid and cooperative way of life whose only border was the limit of knowledge.

KATHERINE STEWART, Director-General, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada, said the Government recognized the distinctive health needs of the First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples of Canada. An Inuit-led Health Summit was held in January 2008 to help focus attention on the unique issues and needs facing that community. The Government had invested funds for health

projects designed to help the Inuit, including a pilot project on mental wellness and on collecting data on Inuit health. In 2008, Health Canada established an Office of Inuit Health.

She said that in 2008-2009, Health Canada would spend over \$2 billion to promote better health outcomes for all aboriginal peoples. Meanwhile, \$147 million in federal funding was being allocated to benefit First Nations and the Inuit in the next two years. Those programmes would focus on health issues such as maternal-child health and diabetes, collecting data and information and tackling tuberculosis. Another \$330 million would be used to improve First Nations' access to safe drinking water over the next two years.

BRIGITTE FEIRING, Chief Technical Adviser, Programme to promote ILO Convention 169, International Labour Organization, turned to the Forum's recommendations in 2006 -- directed at the World Bank, IMF, United Nations organizations and other members of the international community -- to explore mechanisms to include indigenous peoples in poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) and to report back on progress made. In 2007, the ILO initiated a one-year process to do just that in Cambodia, Cameroon and Nepal, with support from Denmark. The ILO worked with Governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations to influence PRSP processes, particularly their implementation.

She said the ILO had published a practice guide on the inclusion of indigenous peoples in policymaking process. It was not meant as a blueprint for such activities. Rather, it addressed the importance of contextualizing approaches to country-specific situations in applying international standards to national processes. It speaks of the difficulties in achieving the commitment of donors and financial institutions in making development more inclusive. She expressed surprise that there had been no attempt to include indigenous viewpoints in the international financial aid architecture, such as the Paris and Rome Declarations and in the PRSPs themselves. Indigenous points of view tended to be incorporated in specific projects with limited impact, and not in broader national policies and programmes. That could only be rectified through sustained dialogue and practical collaboration at the country level. The ILO would continue to raise awareness of the issue within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), for example.

CARLOS SUÁREZ (Colombia) said his country had abstained from voting on the Declaration, but national legislation was consistent with the Declaration's principles. There were, however, some elements in the Declaration that conflicted with national law, including those relating to resources in the soil. Also, the principle of prior consent did not harmonize with the Constitution, which called for prior consultations, not prior consent. Further, his country was party to the ILO Convention, which also covered the indigenous peoples' rights on standards, such as multiculturalism. New requirements to be met through legislation were always arising and Colombia's law evolved to meet them. The legislative branch had its own way of meeting the needs of its people, including through dialogue and debate. Colombia, like every State, had developed its Constitution to protect its people.

MICHAEL DODSON, Forum member from Australia, introduced a paper in progress on indigenous land rights and land tenure and requested an extension of his mandate as a special rapporteur on the matter, so as to continue the work on free and prior consent as a central principle of both the Declaration and the ILO Convention on indigenous peoples.

MARCOS ESPINAL, Executive Secretary, Global Stop Tuberculosis Partnership, World Health Organization, noted that 9 million people suffered from the disease worldwide, and 2 million had died. One third of the global population, or 2 billion people, was currently infected by the bacteria causing tuberculosis. That disease was one of the three major killers of the adult population -- which was a complete disgrace, because it could be cured with a \$20 treatment. Rates of infection among indigenous peoples were 20 to 30 times higher than among non-indigenous peoples. The Forum's commitment to combating the disease was crucial and, working jointly with the World Health Organization and 700 of its partners worldwide, it could help wipe out tuberculosis among indigenous peoples.

QIN XIAOMEI, a Permanent Forum member from China, highlighted the importance of education to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Education was a basic human right and a

sine qua non for achieving other human rights. Through education, societies could better promote the realization of economic and social development of indigenous peoples, thereby ensuring the collective rights of peoples, not just individual rights.

She urged international organizations and civil society to play their part in promoting education. Governments and indigenous peoples should work together do the same, on the basis of mutual trust. Also, indigenous peoples risked losing their languages because of globalization. Various countries should make use of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to increase the use of those languages.

EGBERTO TABO CHIPUNAVI, speaking on behalf of the Amazon Basin, said his group represented 1.5 million people from 400 communities in a large area of the Amazon Basin. He called for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the Climate Change Convention processes and matters relating to the Convention on Biodiversity. The United Nations should establish a group of indigenous experts that would coordinate with specialized United Nations agencies responsible for implementation of indigenous issues. The world must ensure full respect for the right of indigenous peoples to free prior informed consent.

He went on to call for more access to technology transfer discussions, and that support be given to indigenous strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change. Further, industrialized countries must make reparations for any damages they were responsible for causing.

LILIANE MUZANGI MBELA, Forum member from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recommended that copies of the WHO report be made available.

CHAITANYA SUBBA, Member of the National Planning Commission of Nepal, said his country was on track for achieving goals on poverty and hunger, but there were disparities in the circumstances of the large numbers of ethnic groups in Nepal. About 44 per cent of indigenous peoples lived below the poverty line, as compared to the national average of 31 per cent. Malnutrition was acute in rural areas inhabited largely by the disadvantaged indigenous. Nepal was also off track on education and making slow but steady progress in gender-related areas. In those, and all areas, Nepal depended on foreign aid as a crucial element in its development programme.

He said his country was in the process of a big political transformation, now that a successful Constituent Assembly had been held on 10 April. That, along with a three-year plan already in place for poverty reduction and elimination of disparities, was allowing Nepal to enter a new era of inclusive democracy in which the indigenous peoples and other excluded groups participated. The impact of climate change, however, was having a catastrophic effect on the environment and people, particularly the indigenous living in remote areas. The Government was seeking international cooperation to implement adaptation and mitigation measures.

HASSAN ID BALKASSM, Forum member from Morocco, asked whether the Russian Government had a strategy for incorporating the rights of indigenous peoples into its constitution. And what had Mexico done upon adoption of the Declaration? Were measures being taken to safeguard the natural resources and languages of its indigenous peoples?

A representative of Bolivia said that the Government was facing challenges in making the Declaration operational, despite having turned it into law. Tackling current land-holding patterns was proving difficult, given that even foreigners were engaged in land-grabbing in Bolivia. Some people were still being treated as slaves -- for example, the Guarani. He called on the Forum to help support the indigenous Government of Bolivia in removing the impediments to implementation of the country's very own laws. He asked that committees be formed to record what was happening in Bolivia and to help address the issues he had just talked about.

LOURDES TIBAN, Minister, Ministry of Indigenous Issues, Ecuador, echoed the sentiments expressed by Forum member Bartolomé Clavero, and suggested that the Forum take note of who was and was not supporting the Declaration. For its part, Ecuador was earnestly implementing its provisions, including article 23, which called for the active participation of indigenous peoples in

elaborating and determining economic and social programmes, and to deliver those programmes through their own institutions. In Ecuador, the body in charge of doing so was the Council for Development of Indigenous Peoples. It was about to implement projects to combat poverty and create employment; ensure access to services; ensure diversity and the participation of indigenous peoples in society; engage in the sustainable use of natural resources; and strengthen Government in indigenous territories.

She noted that international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals had not been encouraging, and expressed the view that they could not be achieved by 2015. The pledge by developed nations to raise official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product had not been met. The imbalance among States was growing, as was the gap between poor and rich within nations. There seemed to be a lack of political will on the part of many States to complete the World Trade Organization's Doha development round.

LUZ ANGELA MELO, Human Rights Adviser for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said an intercultural approach to economic, social and cultural rights was essential for ensuring access to quality basic services for indigenous peoples all over the world. The United Nations Development Group had elaborated comprehensive guidelines for the use of Country Teams to make sure the needs and rights of indigenous peoples were taken into account in the design of development programmes. While not binding, the guidelines were very useful in encouraging the relevant parts of the United Nations system and Governments to systematically include indigenous issues and poverty reduction strategies in their development frameworks.

She said her organization had carried out a regional initiative to eradicate maternal mortality among indigenous women by promoting public policies and pilot experiences with intercultural strategies. Five countries in Latin America had begun implementing the programme. The direction for future work with indigenous peoples was to bring together and integrate three key approaches, namely human rights, gender equality and the intercultural approach.

LAURA SYLVIA CALMWIND spoke for the Native Women's Association of Canada, Indigenous Network on Economics and Trade, Mohawk of Kanawake and BC First Nation Leadership. She said Canada had abstained on the Declaration because it did not want to give its indigenous peoples their rights. On the contrary, it used all methods of aggression against them and put all its efforts into depriving them of their rights and their power. The international community and members of the Forum must put out an urgent appeal for Canada to put a stop to violations of the human rights of the indigenous peoples. The Forum must also call for an independent monitor of the situation and for a special session on the effect of climate change on indigenous peoples. Pressure should also be brought to bear on the Government of Canada to free the indigenous leaders it had imprisoned.

Mr. MUNOZ, Special Rapporteur, said that gaining indigenous peoples' access to schools was not enough. He pointed out that never before had so many educated people killed so many others. Schools needed to improve the content and quality of educational material, so that what they taught was relevant and culturally sensitive. He appealed to Governments to work with members of civil society to ensure that the right to good quality education was being respected.

BERNIE YATES, Deputy Secretary, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australia, responded to issues directed at Australia so far. First, he welcomed the positive comments made on the apology in relation to the Stolen Generation, and welcomed the remarks of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, on the Australian Government's statement of intent to close the gap in indigenous health. The Commissioner had been instrumental in developing a partnership with the Government based on shared ambitions and goals.

Regarding concerns of child abuse in the Northern Territory, he said massive Government resources had been expended to address those problems. The result was more police presence and night patrols. School nutrition programmes were providing children with lunch in schools. Food security was being upgraded on a region-by-region basis, through community stores licensing

arrangements. Jobs occupied by aboriginal people had been recognized as Government service delivery jobs, and workers given the appropriate entitlements.

On the employment programme in the Northern Territory, he said the new Government had announced a moratorium on the previous Government's plans to phase out the community job schemes. Some 300 indigenous ranger jobs were being created around the country as part of the "Working on Country" programme. An expert review of the country's emergency response in the Northern Territory would take place independent of the Government and in consultation with indigenous communities.

On aboriginal land rights, he said the Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1976 continued to provide indigenous people the power to negotiate and control mining on their land and to receive returns. The Government was also undertaking consultations with stakeholders on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Ms. ESTRADA (Mexico) said she would make a fuller statement later, but efforts to implement the Declaration centred on disseminating information about the Declaration to the relevant indigenous groups. Hardcopies were being distributed and radio messages broadcast, both in Spanish and indigenous languages. The Declaration was also being distributed to Government departments. A council had been set up composed of locally elected indigenous representatives and other governmental actors. The secretariat in the department of natural resources was in charge of sustainable development measures.

For information media • not an official record