

DRAFT STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS (ITEM 7)
THE 12th SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES
MAY 22nd, UNITED NATIONS

Javier Vásquez, PAHO Human Rights Law Advisor

Thank you Madame Chair:

- Excellencies, Distinguished delegates and Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Distinguished representatives of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen;
- The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is the regional office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO) and at the same time is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American System;
- Since 1949, the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) established that "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition"; and in line with this principle, PAHO in collaboration with Member States, specialized agencies and organizations of indigenous peoples is developing initiatives, strategies, policies and plans of actions to protect the right to health of groups in situations of vulnerability, including indigenous peoples;
- The initiatives of PAHO on the right to health and other related human rights of indigenous peoples are based on the Resolution CD50R8 ("Health and Human Rights", 2010) and resolution CD 47. R18 ("The Health of Indigenous Peoples", 2006) which include 5 lines of actions for technical collaboration and which have been endorsed by all PAHO Member States;
- PAHO's initiatives on the health and human rights of indigenous peoples are also rooted in ILO Convention No. 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries; especially with regard to the provisions on Social Security and Health, the UN and OAS human rights instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights, among others;

↳ The UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities

HOW IS PAHO PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO THE ENJOYMENT OF THE HIGHEST ATTAINABLE STANDARD OF HEALTH AND OTHER RELATED HUMAN RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE AMERICAS?

Bearing in mind that UN and Inter-American Human Rights instruments are useful to measure the progress and evaluate the success of the Member States towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially those related to

eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (MDG 1), reducing child mortality (MDG 4), improving maternal health (MDG 5) and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG 6); PAHO can continue to support the work of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues through the following initiatives:

- a) Facilitating training workshops and disseminating of knowledge in the field about human rights instruments applicable to the health of indigenous peoples¹;
- b) Collaborating with ombudspersons offices and other national governmental agencies charged with protecting human rights in order to visit health centers, services and indigenous communities and to evaluate/oversee the implementation of applicable international human rights instruments related to indigenous peoples;
- c) Disseminating the applicable human rights instruments related to the health of indigenous peoples among appropriate personnel in the legislative and judicial branches of the governments;
- d) Collaborating with PAHO Member States on reviewing and reforming national policies, plans, laws and programs in the context of indigenous people's health and in a manner consistent with ILO Convention 169, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international human rights instruments²;
- e) Collaborating with organizations of indigenous peoples, academic institutions and the private sector in activities related to the promotion and protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially those human rights related to access to health care, health services, essential and traditional medicines;
- f) Providing technical collaboration to regional and international human rights treaty bodies charged with promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), including participating in hearings and issuing technical opinions dealing with the health of indigenous peoples (in particular with respect to malnutrition of children and adolescents

¹ For information on workshops please see PAHO's intervention in Honduras:
http://www.paho.org/spanish/dd/pin/MISKITO_Derechos.doc

² Id.

in the Region, life threatening conditions, access to potable water, food, sanitation and access to medicine and/or health facilities)³;

- g) Publishing and disseminating technical documents and tools such as E-Learning courses as well as good practices outlining the human rights law framework applicable to the health and well-being of indigenous peoples⁴;
 - h) Formulating guidelines and modules for training human resources on intercultural approaches to health, indigenous therapies and medicines in primary health care and in a manner consistent with UN and Inter-American Human Rights Instruments; and
 - h) Strengthening an intersectoral partnership to promote the right to health and other related human rights in collaboration with UN specialized agencies, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health and other special procedures, American University law school, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of LAC, the Office of Alternative Medicine of the National Institute of Health of the United States, among others.
- I thank you very much for this opportunity and in line with the above mentioned areas of action, PAHO will continue to support the important work of the organizations of indigenous peoples of the Americas and is ready to support this Permanent Forum especially on the implementation of the recommendations related to the right to health and other related human rights of indigenous peoples. Thanks.

³ <http://www.oas.org/Photos/2007/10Oct/38/index.htm> Malnutrition among Indigenous children and human rights.

⁴ See PAHO's tool box, Human Rights & Health, Indigenous Peoples. Available at: http://new.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1132&Itemid=1202

Human Rights Session

Wednesday 22nd

- 1) Report on the possible Optional Protocol to the UN Declaration on the Rights of indigenous peoples
- 2) Report on the situation of the human rights of indigenous persons with disabilities.
- 3) Expert mechanism on the rights of indigenous peoples
- 4) Voluntary fund for indigenous peoples.