



**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
OFFICE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Statement by
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**11th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Agenda item 4
Implementation of the United Nations Declaration
on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Mr Chair
Distinguished members of the Forum
Dear indigenous representatives
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and gentlemen,

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is honored to take part in this eleventh session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples' Issues (the Forum).

Mr. Chair, the ILO welcomes your appointment as Chair and wishes you a successful mandate. My organization also takes this opportunity to thank Myrna Cunningham for the open leadership that characterised her mandate as Chair.

As a UN agency mandated to promote social justice, the ILO firmly believes that the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) has become an urgent matter, increasingly so given the current global economic crisis, which has a disproportionately negative impact on the most vulnerable social groups, including indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chair, distinguished members of the Forum,

The ILO would like to draw the Forum's attention to the growing synergies between the Declaration and ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples No. 169 (ILO Convention No.169). The Declaration has opened political spaces and created better conducive environment for ILO Convention No. 169 at the country level. In return, ILO Convention 169-related jurisprudence, State reports, court cases and comments by the ILO supervisory bodies on indigenous peoples' issues has increased the understanding and implementation of the Declaration. The concomitant reference to the Declaration and ILO Convention No. 169 in reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and documents related to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process by the UN Human Rights Council illustrate how these two legal instruments are complementary and mutually supportive.

The implementation of the Declaration and ILO Convention No. 169 inevitably requires a continual building of the capacities of States and social partners'. The ILO technical cooperation programme on indigenous peoples (PRO 169) has scaled-up its capacity building-focused activities, through which

trainings on indigenous peoples issues are now provided to an estimated 2,000 civil servants each year in more than 25 countries across Latin America, Asia and Africa. Furthermore, the 2010 General Observation on the right to consultation by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (the Committee of Experts) has been published and is widely distributed.

Mr. Chair, distinguished members of the Forum,

The implementation of the Declaration should involve also national and regional actors in charge of monitoring States' compliance with their domestic legal frameworks and international obligations. These include ombudspersons, national human rights commissions, judiciaries, parliamentary commissions or caucuses and regional human rights institutions. Such institutions should continue to be provided with tools and current technical knowledge on indigenous peoples' issues so that they can efficiently advise and assist their respective governments.

In October 2011, the ILO, in collaboration with the OHCHR, held a regional meeting on indigenous peoples' rights for ombudspersons in Latin America to share knowledge and experiences. The ILO PRO 169 continues to work with national human rights commissions in many countries and has forged partnerships with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. These partnerships have proven to be critical mechanisms for tracking States implementation of international standards on indigenous peoples.

The private sector, including employers' organizations, are key partners in our efforts to fully realize the Declaration and ILO Convention No.169 since many emerging and developing economies rely on natural resources and extractive industries for their economic growth. As a tripartite organization, the ILO is reinforcing its activities to build effective partnerships between indigenous peoples and business. In September 2011, for instance, the ILO held, in Bogota, Colombia, a regional roundtable meeting on indigenous peoples' issues for employers organizations from eleven Latin American countries. Furthermore, this year, the ILO is publishing more than 2,500 copies a handbook on ILO Convention No.169, which also discusses the inter linkages between the Declaration, business and indigenous peoples. And more recently, the ILO has taken part in discussions organized by the UN Global Compact on the theme 'indigenous peoples and business'.

Mr. Chair, distinguished members of the Forum

The ILO wishes to update the Forum on the United Nations Indigenous Peoples Partnership (UNIPP), as the Technical Secretariat of this inter-agency and rights-based initiative, which was established by the OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and the ILO, in implementation of articles 41 and 42 of the Declaration. Beforehand, it should be noted that UNIPP was created following the Forum's 39th recommendation made at its 9th session and that called on UN agencies to join efforts with a view to advancing the implementation of the Declaration.

On behalf of UNIPP, the ILO wishes to thank the Forum members for their unconditional support and particularly Myrna Cunningham and Devasish Roy for their active and invaluable participation in the steps that led to UNIPP becoming operational.

The ILO is pleased to inform the Forum that all UNIPP institutions and organs have now been established.

These include a Policy Board that comprises four indigenous experts representing all regions; a Co-chairpersonship by HCHR and one indigenous representative as the co-chairs and a technical secretariat hosted by the ILO in Geneva. UNIPP Trust Fund is hosted and serviced by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), to whom we are also grateful. All NIPP constitutional documents have also now been adopted, including the Policy Board's terms of reference, the operational guidelines, and a strategic framework, which has just been published and is available for distribution at this session.

Seven pilot projects are currently supported by UNIPP, following a rigorous selection process by the Policy Board in October 2011. These projects are implemented in Nicaragua, Bolivia, Central African Republic, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Nepal, in addition to one regional programme in Southeast Asia. These seven projects, which were all jointly elaborated and designed to support on-going national processes on indigenous peoples' are now being implemented with active participation of governments and indigenous peoples.

In Nicaragua and Central African Republic for instance, UNIPP-funded projects are supporting the implementation of the Declaration and Convention No. 169, which both countries ratified in 2010. In Bolivia and the Republic of Congo, UNIPP projects support the implementation of specific domestic laws on indigenous peoples' rights as well as recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur on indigenous peoples in those countries.

Mr. Chair, distinguished members of the Forum

UNIPP is currently funded by the Governments of Denmark and Finland, two countries to whom we are grateful as efforts to forge new partnerships continue.

The Forum might want to consider reiterating its support to UNIPP as an initiative to catalyse multi-actor efforts at the country level with a view to ensuring sustainable implementation of international standards on indigenous peoples' rights, notably the Declaration and ILO Convention No. 169.

The ILO firmly believes that taken together, and with strong support and in partnership with key stakeholders, we will achieve an equitable and lasting right-based approach to our most pressing issues

I thank you.