

**Remarks by UNDP Associate Administrator, Rebeca Grynspan on the occasion of the Opening Session of the Tenth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

*Indigenous Peoples' Contributions to Human Development*

I am grateful to have the opportunity to address the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues again this year.

First, I would also like to congratulate the Forum in this tenth anniversary session for providing us with an invaluable opportunity to reflect on the progress we've made in realizing the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples everywhere –and to focus in on what we can do collectively to address the pressing priorities that remain.

Much of our focus, thus far, has rightly been on the need to increase the voice and representation of indigenous peoples in national and international decision-making. This work remains critical.

Here at the Forum's Tenth Session, however, I think it's important to put this work into the broader context of our global efforts to advance sustainable human development. Expanding the rights, voice, participation and opportunities for indigenous peoples' is essential, not only as objectives in their own right, but also crucial to any society that aims to generate the kind of inclusive development that will build communities that are more just diverse and cohesive.

Human development is not possible where discrimination, injustice, and social exclusion prevail, and where there is a lack of recognition that all groups bring value to society with their different worldviews. It is about enabling people to live the lives they value – without discrimination—while exercising their individual and collective rights.

Therefore, if we define development as expanding people's choices to live the life they desire and value, then development should help societies recognize and integrate ethnic groups, religions, languages and values, to avoid cultural exclusion that make peoples' contributions invisible to society, as we indicated here last year

More than twenty years after the human development movement first called on Member States to recognize that people are the true wealth of nations, we find that exclusion and discrimination remain significant barriers to progress. According to the UN Permanent Forum:

The approximately 370 million indigenous people living in the world today make up as much as 15 percent of the world's poor;

It is estimated that up to one-third of the rural poor are indigenous.

Last year's 20th Anniversary Human Development Report confirmed that most measures of human development are lower for indigenous peoples in high or low level income countries alike. Indigenous peoples have significantly lower life expectancy, educational attainment and income compared to the rest of the population, which highlights significant gaps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

To close the gaps countries and reverse the trends, countries need to act in key areas:

First, they will need more inclusive governance systems, according to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In this context, we can see some progress, in particular in Latin America where indigenous movements have been increasingly able to engage meaningfully in political processes.

Yet, in too many places there is still a lack of cultural understanding which leads to discrimination and exclusion.

In this sense, UNDP is strengthening its capacity to work for the rights of indigenous peoples more effectively—from a human rights basis and under the area of democratic governance—thus responding to the recommendations of this Forum in 2010. Therefore, UNDP is contributing to promoting more inclusive governance systems. For example in Latin America and the Caribbean, we work with government officials and indigenous peoples for greater knowledge and understanding of political processes that are truly participatory.

In Asia-Pacific, we facilitate region-wide policy dialogues designed to help policy makers translate the aspirations of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into meaningful development policy. While in the Pacific, UNDP supports efforts to engage traditional leadership in local governance.

The full and meaningful participation of Indigenous People is also central to UNDP's support for UN-REDD – UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Programme). UNDP helped develop safeguards to ensure that all UN-REDD activities adhere to the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to free, prior and informed consent. We are pioneering efforts to take these standards forward, working with indigenous peoples to translate them into practice.

Second, countries must intensify their efforts in meeting the Millennium Development Goals relating to communities and issues that are important to indigenous peoples.

We know that we need specific strategies that are guided by the views and priorities of indigenous peoples to overcome the "invisibility", which is manifested, for example, by the absence of adequate statistical data and information. UNDP is supporting the capacity of countries to collect disaggregated data to enable better address the barriers to human development—generated with the participation of indigenous peoples.

We are also rolling out what we call the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework, an innovative tool to help countries identify the real barriers that prevent the MDG progress, often related to exclusion and discrimination—as well as other key areas such as the need for culturally-adapted services—which have been included in this framework in line with last year's Forums guidelines.

In Belize, for example, applying the Acceleration Framework helped the government to identify why rural areas, primarily populated by Mayan communities, were not receiving adequate water and sanitation services. The lack of representation and participation by stakeholders in local water boards and a lack of accountability were identified as the key

bottlenecks. Specific measures were then agreed upon to improve the governance of water boards – making them more inclusive and accountable. Similarly, the Government of Lao PDR used the Acceleration Framework to generate support for proven interventions to improve primary education for girls –in its 56 most disadvantaged, mainly rural, districts.

Taking forward these targeted solutions is an important step in advancing inclusive development which gives all members of society a chance to achieve the MDGs.

Finally, to advance inclusive governance and development, countries need strong national and local institutions and a capable public administration.

With the second cycle of the Universal Period Review commencing next year, it will be important to support Governments, National Human Rights Institutions, indigenous peoples and civil society to integrate the recommendations of this Forum. Harmonizing legislation and organizational objectives with human rights principles is, of course, only the first step. Critically, laws and initiatives to protect and advance the rights of indigenous peoples' must translate into policy and practice. UNDP is fully committed to helping countries to both harmonize their legal systems and strengthen the institutions needed to make the law accessible and meaningful.

Our success in advancing the rights of indigenous peoples will depend, on our joint work and a partnership with all stakeholders represented in this room today.

From the United Nations, through the slogan "United in action", we are trying to implement the spirit of common purpose. In Nicaragua, for example, the UN has instituted a dialogue process and partnership with indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants ensuring that their views and priorities are fully integrated into the UN's work in this country.

Also in this spirit and in response to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and recommendations by this Permanent Forum last year, the International Labour Organisation, UNDP, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Children's Fund have joined to establish the UN-Indigenous Peoples Partnership which will be launched this Friday. Our agencies are teaming up together to help countries implement the provisions of the Declaration and ILO Convention 169 at the country level. The partnership will include efforts to establish mechanisms for more effective dialogue and consultative process, strengthening access to justice and conflict prevention over ancestral lands and the use of natural resources.

We look forward to involving other members of the UN system and to working with all you to make this successful. The guidance of this Forum will be especially important.

Working together, indigenous peoples, governments and the international community can put an end to exclusion and discrimination, enable indigenous peoples to exercise their full rights in free and diverse societies, and continue to enriching these societies in their full potential.