

FF/michele 305
copy



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

Check against delivery

**STATEMENT BY MS. MICHELE KLEIN-SOLOMON
AT THE TENTH SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS
ISSUES, UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

**Special Rapporteur's study on forced labour and indigenous peoples; Special Rapporteur's
study on the impacts of the global crisis on indigenous peoples
New York, 25 May, 2011**

Madame Chairperson, distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and great pleasure for the International Organization for Migration to be invited to speak at this 10th annual meeting of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. It is in a context of increased dialogue and partnership with indigenous communities that IOM joins this forum; we are pleased to reiterate our readiness to work with the international community to enhance the level of participation and contribution of indigenous peoples in addressing many global crises affecting them, including those related to climate change and environmental degradation.

The nexus between migration and indigenous peoples is unique. Because of their especially close link to their communities and lands, migration of indigenous peoples from their physical and cultural environment, whether voluntary or forced, often has a deep collective and cultural impact. In the migration process, indigenous peoples are at risk of losing both tangible and intangible connections to their native lands, unique community life and traditions that have been preserved and cherished for centuries. Traditional policies of integration and assimilation promoted for regular migrants are problematic and potentially harmful in the case of indigenous peoples. Because of their strong connection to the land and nature, indigenous peoples and their traditional economies are particularly vulnerable in the face of the multiple effect of climate change, including diminishing land and associated rights. Environmental degradation, climate change, poverty and lack of sustainable livelihoods in indigenous communities can become very strong push factors for indigenous peoples to consider migration as a means of survival and ensuring a better future for the next generations.

Indigenous peoples migrate to urban areas or abroad in search of employment, educational prospects and opportunities, improved access to health services and housing, increased political participation, social recognition or visibility they may lack in their native communities. They migrate as well as an adaptation response to climate change and environmental degradation. Indigenous peoples have acknowledged that migration often becomes their only means to ensure the survival of the traditional way-of-life in their territories, through urban-rural remittances.



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

While migration can be empowering for some indigenous communities, for others migration brings risks of exploitation and abuse. Facing discrimination and poverty while seeking employment opportunities abroad or in urban areas, some indigenous peoples are recruited by labour intermediaries who – through wage advances and other manipulations - induce them into artificial debt they cannot repay. This situation is exacerbated in the case of indigenous women, who find themselves at the bottom of the occupational ladder in the labour market. Trafficking of indigenous peoples is an increasing concern because of their particularly vulnerable social position; regrettably, examples of trafficking in indigenous women, girls and boys have been reported in many countries. The link between trafficking and social marginalization means indigenous peoples – particularly women and children – are most at risk of being trafficked. In Asia, for example, indigenous migrant women are particularly affected by the negative sides of urbanization and need special support, including protection against physical and emotional harassment and to counter the risk of being lured into human trafficking networks.

For its part, IOM pays special attention to the impacts of migration on indigenous peoples. For example, all IOM projects in Colombia incorporate a strategy for the inclusion of an ethnic focus for indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Indigenous communities in Cambodia are learning how to plan and prepare to respond to natural disasters through an IOM project that supports the formation of Village Disaster Management Teams. In this context, IOM has undertaken research and work related to both indigenous peoples' issues and climate change, including mapping the nexus between them, to approach this phenomenon systematically and consistently in providing assistance both to indigenous peoples and the governments concerned.

Madam Chairperson,

Measures are needed to address the particularities of indigenous migration, including its push factors. If indigenous peoples choose to migrate, it is important to prevent the dilution of their customs and traditional ways of life, by empowering indigenous peoples against discrimination, encouraging education in their native language, training in traditional crafts and skills and promoting a 'different but equal approach' to indigenous migrants within host societies. This requires high levels of cooperation between the indigenous community and the host government, and with other relevant stakeholders.

Preserving diversity in a globalizing world is a difficult undertaking. It can only be achieved through inclusive processes. IOM advocates for closer dialogue and cooperation of all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels on migration, ensuring that the views and concerns of indigenous peoples are heard and addressed. We wish you great success with this year's Permanent Forum. Thank you.

Permanent Observer to the United Nations

122 East 42nd Street • Chanin Building • 48th Floor • New York, NY 10168-1610

Tel: (212) 681-7000 • Fax: (212) 867-5887 • E-mail: unobserver@iom.int • Internet: www.iom.int; www.un.int/iom