

PF/11/ANTTI/098

Check against delivery

18 May 2011, Item 4, Human Rights

Draft remarks at the 10th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Antti Korkeakivi

**Chief, Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section,
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

I would like to start by congratulating the new members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on their appointment and Ms Mirna Cunningham on her election as the chair of the Forum.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights looks forward to working closely with you and with our colleagues in the Secretariat of the Forum to pursue our common task of improving the implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples.

In doing so, we can build on the excellent cooperation that we have enjoyed with the previous composition of the Forum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples remains a key priority for OHCHR, and indigenous issues figure prominently in the High Commissioner's Strategic Management Plan.

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples serves as OHCHR's framework for action to further the advancement and protection of indigenous peoples' rights.

Our report to this session provides details on our activities on the Declaration, but I would like to briefly highlight some aspects of our work.

Much of our concrete work on the Declaration is carried out by and with our field presences, often in close cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples – supporter by our office – and other partners. Last month, the Heads of our field presences devoted a special session in their annual meeting to the issue of indigenous peoples, looking at ways in which we could further bolster the impact of the Declaration. Our offices around the world are invoking the Declaration in their work, and our Regional Representative for Central America will later give you some details as to what this means in practice in her region.

We have also expanded our engagement with National Human Rights Institutions, who can be key vehicles for improved implementation of the Declaration. The Office recently organized, in partnership with the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, a regional consultation for indigenous peoples and NHRIs on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and we are now developing a practical guide for national human rights institutions worldwide on how to use the Declaration.

We have also continued to provide solid support to the work of the Expert Mechanism on the rights of indigenous peoples, including through a technical expert workshop we recently organised on the right to participate in decision-making. Obviously, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has been the key reference in this work.

The Office does not work in isolation. We are constantly pursuing cooperation with UN colleagues and other partners. For example, we have partnered with the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and UNDP to develop a handbook for parliamentarians on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, following a global conference on the representation of minorities and indigenous peoples in Parliaments in Chiapas, Mexico.

The recommendations of the Forum have often been instrumental as catalysts for such collaboration. For example, in response to your recommendation, OHCHR, ILO and the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (SPFI) jointly organized a technical meeting on "Keeping track – indicators, mechanisms and data for assessing the implementation of indigenous peoples' rights" in Geneva on 20-21 September 2010. The conclusions of the meeting are contained in a report submitted to the present session of the Forum.

Further to a recommendation of the UN Permanent Forum addressed to OHCHR, ILO and UNDP to "strengthen their collaborative framework and partnership for the promotion and implementation of indigenous peoples' rights through joint country programmes...", we are this week launching the UNIPP aimed to make sure that the Declaration and ILO 169 result in positive, concrete changes.

In addition, the Office has supported co-operation and interaction between the three UN mandates devoted to indigenous peoples. It invites, on a regular basis, representatives of the Forum and other mandates to the relevant meetings, and will facilitate another interaction between mandates by a hosting a coordination meeting in July 2011 in Geneva to discuss co-operation and synergies.

In order for the Declaration to yield concrete results, there is a need to build capacity and expertise at the national level. OHCHR's indigenous fellowship programme is one important tool to build such capacity within civil society. In addition to fellowship programmes in English, French, Spanish and Russian, OHCHR has introduced the position of a Senior Indigenous Fellow as part of its

efforts to restructure and improve the programme. The first Senior Fellow joined OHCHR last week for a period of three months.

Finally, let me stress that, while I have focused on the activities devoted to indigenous peoples per se, our work to support such human rights mechanisms as treaty bodies, Human Rights Council's UPR process and a range of special procedures is also of great significance for indigenous peoples. The input and engagement of indigenous peoples in these processes is essential. It is therefore important to note that the mandate of the Voluntary Fund on Indigenous Populations, serviced by OHCHR, has recently been expanded. In addition to the participation in the EMRIP and the PFII, including this session, the Fund can now also support representatives of indigenous peoples to attend sessions of the Human Rights Council and treaty bodies, where they can raise issues related to the implementation of the Declaration.

Madame Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

OHCHR looks forward to continuous collaboration with the Forum and all other partners committed to the improved implementation of the Declaration.

Thank you for your attention.