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Speech of Mililani B. Trask
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INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

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For Consideration by the PFII Panel of Experts and all Indigenous Peoples Delegates attending the 5th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII)

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG): KEY POINTS OF PROBLEMS, CONSTRAINTS AND BARRIERS AND RE-DEFINING MDG 1 (POVERTY) AND MDG 7 (ENVIRONMENT)

The Inter-agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues had a meeting in September 2004 that made the following statement on MDGs:

.....as the 2005 review of the implementation of the MDGs nears, it appears from available evidence that indigenous and tribal peoples are lagging behind other parts of the population in the achievement of the goals in most, if not all, the countries in which they live, and indigenous and tribal women commonly face additional gender-based disadvantages and discrimination... Concern has also been expressed that the effort to meet the targets laid down for MDGs could in fact have harmful effects for indigenous and tribal peoples, such as the acceleration of the loss of the lands and natural resources or the displacement from those lands.

- Indigenous Peoples are completely invisible in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), within countries where Indigenous Peoples live.
- Poverty among Indigenous Peoples is often related to colonization/neo-colonization and to the systemic racism, discrimination and non-recognition of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and individual and collective-rights. Political, social, economic and environmental inequities and injustice perpetuate the impoverishment of Indigenous Peoples.
- There has been resistance by Indigenous Peoples to being identified as poor because of its negative and discriminatory connotation. MDG indicators must be developed to take into consideration culturally appropriate indicators, redefining the process of impoverishment caused by dispossession of ancestral lands, loss of control over natural resources and indigenous knowledge, devastating social and environmental impacts, impacts from militarization and conflict and forced assimilation into the mainstream society and integration into the market economy.
- There is a need for poverty indicators which are not framed within a market and cash-based economy. The current MDG poverty indicator of living with \$1/day cannot capture nor adequately reflect poverty as perceived by Indigenous Peoples'. Poverty alleviation must start from Indigenous Peoples own definitions and indicators of poverty.
- Governments speak of "poverty" while Indigenous Peoples speak of "rights". Within Indigenous territories, poverty is also defined by power deficits, lack of self-determination, marginalization and lack of mechanisms for meaningful participation and access to decision-making processes.
- The paradigm of economic growth through trade and investment liberalization, deregulation, and privatization, so far, has resulted in the further impoverishment of Indigenous Peoples.

The key weakness of the MDGs is that it does not question the mainstream development paradigm nor does it address the economic, political, social and cultural structural causes of poverty.

- Development paradigms and policies have caused Indigenous communities to become more impoverished where economic growth (especially within the Global South) has been dependent on massive extraction of natural resources such as mineral extraction, oil, gas, timber, plant and aquatic resources, and the construction of large infrastructure such as hydroelectric dams and commercial toxic agricultural industries.
- Impoverishment and quality of environmental sustainability is associated with Indigenous language loss. Indigenous languages are precise tools developed through many millennia, defining our relationship with our environment and cosmology. Through language, we represent the cultural diversity of the world. Data and indicators for determining the status and trends of speakers of indigenous languages are needed.
- Biological and environmental indicators must be complemented by human, cultural and social indicators. This would reflect critical human development factors affecting biodiversity. An integrated ecosystem management approach based on Indigenous traditional knowledge should be the framework for implementation, assessments and monitoring of MDGs.
- The establishment of protected areas has historically been a major cause of forced displacement of, and lack of access to Indigenous Peoples, especially in Africa and developing countries. Indicators must be defined that view how Indigenous Peoples have used these protected areas for millennia for food, medicines, subsistence and for spiritual ceremony.
- Development frameworks must involve the active participation of whole villages and communities, not just the leaders of the community. The principle of free prior and informed consent must include the following: Include all members of the community affected by the decision; consent is determined in accordance with customary laws and practices; freedom from external manipulation, interference or coercion; full disclosure of the intent and scope of the activity; decision is made in language understandable to the community; decision is made in process understandable to the community; and consent is given by the practitioners of traditional knowledge and spiritual leaders.
- The Kimberley Declaration and the Indigenous Peoples' Plan for Sustainable Development (World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002) should be used as a reference for Indigenous Peoples, governments and multilateral bodies when they are formulating and assessing their sustainable development plans, policies and programs. This documents complement Agenda 21, JPOI and the MDG targets.
- Indigenous peoples, therefore, fear that culturally insensitive implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), Millennium Development Goals and country-wide Poverty Reduction Strategies could lead to further impoverishment and marginalization.
- The human-rights based approach to development is essential to the achievement of the MDGs. The MDGs must therefore be firmly grounded on a rights-based approach, to have meaning for indigenous Peoples.

This information sheet is meant to provide some language for delegates at the PFII, 5th Session to use and adopt as they need. This document is not meant to be comprehensive. IEN thanks Ms. Joji Carino, Tebtebba Foundation (Indigenous Peoples International Centre for Policy, Research and Education) and the Indigenous Peoples Caucus of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development for information used.

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