

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Tenth session

New York, 16-27 May 2011

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum

Environment

The environment is one of the six substantive mandated areas of the Permanent Forum. For Indigenous Peoples, the natural environment provides them with the means for survival. Their spiritual beliefs are also connected to the plants, animals, waters and places they have inhabited since time immemorial.

From its second to eighth sessions, the Permanent Forum has made recommendations on the environment to cover a range of issues such as climate change, traditional knowledge, access and benefit-sharing, land tenure, conservation, pollution, water, forests, fishing, renewable energy, reindeer herding, indicators, and the participation of and policies on indigenous peoples in discussions around this issues.

Environmental issues are also incorporated in a number of articles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These include Articles 25 to 32 which outline the rights of indigenous peoples in relation to maintaining and strengthening their spiritual relationship with lands, territories and resources. This also include the right to not only own, develop and control their lands, to conserve and protect the environment and the productive capacity of lands and to determine development on their lands but also ~~and~~ to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and the knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora.

The articles also specifically address such issues as the need for States to give due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions and customs and land tenure systems; restitution for land, territories and resources confiscated, taken or occupied; and States taking effective measures to ensure that there is no storage of hazardous materials or

disposal of such materials in the lands and territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

This year, one of the focuses of the discussion will be the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the Green Economy Initiative. These issues could be understood under the framework for environmental sustainability, which is also Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals. Hence, environmental issues continue to be linked to sustainability and to means for alleviating poverty in the world.

Climate Change is also an issue for indigenous Peoples. The Cancun Agreements adopted at the 16th Conference of Parties ~~of~~^{to} the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2010 will have implications for Indigenous Peoples. Key decisions are also expected to be made at the 17th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in December, 2011. Forests are a critical part this discussions.

Thank you!