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UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENEOUS ISSUES
FOURTH SESSION
NEW YORK, MAY, 2005

Item: The Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger – MDG #1

Presenter: Mililani B. Trask

Collective Statement:

The Rapanui Parliament and Council of Chiefs
Tavini Hui Raatira – No Te Ao Maohi French Polynesia
Bougainville Autonomous Government
The Pacific Concerns Resource Center (ECO-SOC)
The Indigenous World Association/Na Koa Ikaika o Ka Lahui Hawaii, Affiliate
The Koani Foundation
World Council of Churches, Pacific
Nauru Island Association
Turanga/Tuvaluatu Komiuniti – Vanuatu
and others

Recommendations Re: Human Rights and Expert Report

1. We thank the forum chair for her expert paper E/CN.19/2005/4/Add.13 28 March 2005 and strongly endorse the recommendations contained therein in paragraphs 42 and 44.
2. We urge the forum to adopt the recommendations of the expert on human rights and extreme poverty Arjen Sengapta, E/CN.4/2005/49. Specifically, we support the definition of extreme poverty contained therein, that extreme poverty should be defined as a composite of income poverty, human development poverty and social exclusion, to encompass the notions of lack of basic security and capability deprivation. We request that the forum urge ECO-SOC, states, UN agencies and specialized bodies to adopt this definition of extreme poverty as they address the MDGs.
3. We request the forum endorse and support the recommendation of the previous expert on human rights and extreme poverty in E/CN.4/2004/43. Specifically, that the forum recommend to the IMF and World Bank that their Articles of Agreement be amended to add the phrase “while respecting human rights, particularly economic and social rights” to article I (ii) and Article IV, Sec. 1(i) IMF and Article II (iii) and Article III, Sec. 5(b) of the World Bank.

Recommendations relating to Processes for Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Globalization

4. The UNPFII recommends that the Pacific Island Forum, the APEC, the CBD & WTO enact and adopt procedures to facilitate the meaningful participation of indigenous peoples in their proceedings. We recommend that these bodies consider a process similar to that used by the UNPFII or in the alternative that credentials for full participation including the right to file and give oral interventions, be provided to indigenous NGOs with UN ECO-SOC status.
5. We recommend that the UNPFII through its secretariat, establish formal contact with the Pacific Island Forum to ensure the Forum Pacific Expert will be able to attend and participate in meeting of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) and to explore processes for the broader participation of indigenous peoples of the Pacific in PIF sessions.
6. The UNPFII work with the IASG and the UNDG (UN Development Group) to address the need for risk assessments relating to negative impacts of MDG implementation programs and strategies on indigenous peoples, lands, territories and resources.

Narrative:

“After decades of failed economic development, stagnant private investment and declining public service delivery, poverty is now a major concern in the Pacific. The level of poverty is estimated at 40% in Vanuatu, 48% in Samoa and 50% in Kiribati.” - Teneiariki Tevi, Dept. of Education & Psychology, University of South Pacific.

“Pacific island countries face threats of increasing poverty amidst increasing global wealth, advances in technology, manipulation of accumulating information and increasingly accessible opportunities...” -- Ms. Suliana Siwatibau, Consultant.

See Report of the Inaugural Pacific Consultation on the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues – March 15-17, 2004, Nadave, Suva, Fiji, Pacific Concerns Research Centre.

In 2001 the World Council of Churches Pacific Region sponsored a conference on Economic Globalization in the Pacific. The report of the proceedings, Island of Hope, A Pacific Alternative to Economic Globalization verified that one of the primary causes of poverty in the Pacific is globalization. The report assessed impacts in the social political, ecological and economic arenas. The findings include the following:

“Social

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in the number of families living beneath the poverty line. Many of the causes of this rise in poverty are inter-linked with the adoption by national government of liberal policies

promoting investment and competition to the detriment of social services such as education, health and social welfare. There has also been a significant erosion in wages and working conditions, and industries that have enjoyed growth booms in recent years have been based on low wages and poor working conditions.

...National economic policies aim for greater liberalization and competition in the economy, ignoring their social and economic ramifications. Through the South Pacific Forum, Pacific Island leaders recently agreed to the establishment of a Pacific Islands Free Trade Area and have been proclaiming the benefits of such a free trade area. Yet, in a different meeting, a majority of the same leaders (the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders in Feb. 2001, Honolulu) expressed serious doubts and apprehensions about the claimed benefits of globalization, and reflected on the option of not jumping on the globalization bandwagon.

Political

Within the last 10 years, countries in the Pacific region have attracted increasing international attention. A series of serious crises has indeed placed the Pacific region on the world map of political and economic trouble spots. Professor Ron Crocombe has stated that internal threats, resulting from ethnic tension, land problems, economic disparities and a lack of confidence in governments' ability to solve the problems, pose the most serious security threat in the Pacific Island countries today. The political and constitutional crises in Fiji and Solomon Islands have demonstrated the very serious nature of internal security threats in the region. It could be argued that many of these threats have intensified as a consequence of the mixed impacts of 'reform' policies based on economic liberalism. These impacts include increasing economic disparities, new opportunities for rapid enrichment, increased competition for control of government and public funds, and reduced state capacity to effectively address social problems.

Ecological

...The region has more rare endangered and threatened species per capita than anywhere else on earth. Its marine environment comprises an enormous and largely unexplored resource, including the most extensive and diverse reefs in the world, the largest tuna fishery, the deepest ocean trenches and the healthiest remaining populations of many globally-threatened species including whales, sea turtles, dugongs and saltwater crocodiles. Its high islands support large areas of intact rainforests, including many unique species and communities of plants and animals found nowhere else in the world.

...There is intensive exploitation, rather than sustainable management, of the Pacific's natural resources. Many of our people are lured by promises of large cash bonuses and easily forget the long term ramifications of such short-

term gains. PICs continue to derive poor returns from the sale of their natural resources, and calls from regional environmental organizations to exploit natural resources in a sustainable manner are unheeded.

Much of the exploitation of our natural resources is done by trans-national corporations (TNC's) whose primary interest is profit. Resource owners derive a miniscule proportion of the return while large profits are made by the corporations.

Economic

There has been limited success in diversifying the economic bases and encouraging productive private sector investment in small island countries and returns on public investments have been low. Agriculture and fishing remain the main economic activities for the vast majority of the region's population, and for some countries, they are their only source exports. Given these realities, Pacific Governments may be said to be pursuing economic policies that are completely unsuitable. A heavy emphasis on foreign investment as the engine of growth will encourage greater foreign control of island economies and create increased dependency by Pacific peoples on externally devised economic initiatives rather than promoting and supporting local initiatives.

Undue political and economic influence exercised by foreign business interests can have harmful development and security consequences."

The indigenous Pacific Basin peoples have found that the procedures and processes utilized by governments and UN agencies and specialized bodies marginalizes and silences them.

For example, indigenous Pacific islanders were not able to attend or participate the WTO meeting in Cancun because there is no process to admit them. Representatives of the indigenous nations and peoples of the Pacific are not allowed to participate in the APEC sessions and have been excluded from consultations relating to the APEC Integrated Oceans Management Plan. The Pacific Islands Forum is currently fast tracking "the Pacific Plan" for trade liberalization – but will not allow indigenous NGOs or peoples to participate. The CBD which is now addressing bio-piracy and traditional knowledge allows few indigenous delegates as observers but does not allow indigenous peoples to participate meaningfully. Indigenous input is allowed at the end of each agenda item for one intervention. In many instances, the Indigenous intervention is not recognized due to time constraints.

These and other bodies are proponents of globalization. Their decision impact the indigenous peoples of the Pacific, their processes and procedures ensure the indigenous perspective will not be heard or considered.

We believe that indigenous peoples need access to these sessions. Consequently, we are making recommendation 4. We attach herewith a signed resolution from Pacific nations, peoples and NGOs relating to the APEC, the Pacific Plan and the CBD/WTO processes.