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17/05/05, #3(a), 43



**NORWAY**

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**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**  
**Fourth session**  
Item 3 (a)  
Goal 1 of the Millennium Development  
Goals and indigenous peoples

**STATEMENT**

by

**H.E. Mr. Johan L. Løvald**  
**Ambassador**  
**Permanent Representative**

New York, 17 May 2005

Madam Chairperson,

Today a large part of the world has an historic opportunity to join in the effort to eradicate poverty and realise the Millennium Development Goals. Norway remains fully committed to this endeavour.

The MDGs can only be understood within the context of the Millennium Declaration, which reaffirms the human rights obligations of States. This means that no State will be able to achieve the MDGs as long as it disregards fundamental human rights, including the principle of non-discrimination.

Norway will continue to play an active role in the international efforts to promote indigenous peoples' rights. We will also continue to include and strengthen the right-based approach in these efforts.

Indigenous peoples all over the world are among the most marginalized and dispossessed groups of society. Poverty and social marginalization in many countries have an ethnic dimension. It is important to be aware of the complex political and historical causes that frequently lie behind the poverty of indigenous peoples.

Norway is concerned that the indigenous peoples in some countries may be left out of efforts to achieve the MDGs, as reaching these peoples and raising their standard of living to that of other groups is comparatively more difficult. Unless the world's indigenous peoples are reached and are able to benefit from the MDGs, the efforts to fulfil the MDGs by 2015 will fail in many countries.

Madam Chairperson,

There are increased efforts in many countries to align national Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) with the MDGs. This could provide an enhanced opportunity for addressing issues of structural inequalities. However, many of these national strategies do not take vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, into account. Nor do they take into account the barriers that prevent indigenous peoples from

participating in poverty reduction measures, discrimination being one of the main obstacles.

Moreover, very few countries can provide specific information and disaggregated data on the poverty of indigenous peoples. The collection of disaggregated data is necessary in order to gain an understanding of the extent of indigenous peoples' poverty and their particular situation and to develop appropriate programmes.

Norway would also like to point out that indigenous peoples have their own concepts of development, based on their own values, aspirations, needs and priorities. These concepts often differ from the concepts of other parts of the national population. Indigenous peoples may also have specific perceptions and indicators of poverty and well being, for example the loss of access to land or low political participation.

The base point for measuring the MDGs should be sensitive to differing local and national circumstances and cultural perspectives. There is a two-sided challenge to be faced in connection with indigenous peoples and the MDGs: on the one hand indigenous peoples have the right to be fully included and to benefit from the global efforts to achieve the MDGs; on the other hand the rights of indigenous peoples to define their own development and priorities must be respected.

Madam Chairperson,

The Millennium Declaration presents a broad framework for development, including a focus on peace, human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of vulnerable groups. However, the MDGs do not explicitly address the poverty situation of indigenous peoples or poverty that is structured along ethnic lines. Nor does it address the obstacles that prevent indigenous peoples from achieving social, economic and cultural rights.

The recognition of the right of indigenous peoples to define their own priorities for development is reflected in a number of international human rights instruments. It is crucial that the strategies to achieve the MDGs are based on these international standards.

Although the MDGs do not identify indigenous peoples' priorities for development, there are specific indigenous rights, such as the promotion of intercultural bilingual education in primary schools that can be addressed within the context of the MDGs. Measuring not only the net enrolment of indigenous children in primary education, but also the number of children with access to bilingual education, makes an assessment of the fulfilment of indigenous peoples' rights and priorities possible.

It is crucial to ensure the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples in decision-making in matters that could affect their lives. Indigenous peoples should be fully involved in the definition, monitoring and evaluation of national strategies. These strategies will have to be tailored to address the poverty situation of the indigenous people concerned. The needs of indigenous peoples must be met through anti-discrimination efforts, enforcement mechanisms and special affirmative action measures. These are the basic ingredients of a right-based approach to development.

Madam Chairperson,

Norway welcomes the leading role taken by the Permanent Forum in making general recommendations on how to interpret and operationalise the MDGs; both within the framework of human rights and in relation to specific indigenous rights to land and natural resources, bilingual education, culturally appropriate health services, etc. These recommendations must be integrated into the international and national plans to achieve the MDGs and fight poverty.

Thank you.