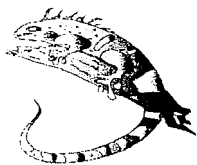


Statement by Mr. Albert DeTerville

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IIPMIC SLCHR COHARDAR IAAR IMRRC SIDS 2005 Mauritius Initiative

**Fourth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
New York, 16-27 May 2005**

**Special theme:** Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples:

3(a) Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals: "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger", to be addressed under the following thematic approach of combating poverty: good practices and barriers to implementation.

**Collective Statement on behalf of the Caribbean Antilles Indigenous Peoples Caucus & the Diaspora.**

The consequences of extreme poverty and hunger among the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Antilles and the Diaspora (SIDS) may be deduced from statistics that indicate the majority of the active indigenous population live under conditions that are for the most part, appalling. Inadequate water supply and solid waste disposal mechanisms, and poor housing are unsatisfactory conditions needing immediate attention.

During the past 50 years, economic globalization contributing to external migration has had its impact on the development of the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Antilles and the Diaspora, as thousands voluntarily migrated to other countries, while many more were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands and deported to other countries.

The agricultural sector has contracted significantly in the past 10 years due to natural and man made disasters. Preferential treatment shall soon come to an end. The sector now contributes approximately 20 percent of the employed labour force. The shift toward a service-oriented economy, with tourism at the helm, has triggered migration to the cities; causing a greater increase in the food import bill and a further reduction in the capacity of the agricultural sector to be self-sufficient in food production. "The ambitious international commitment to halve the number of people facing hunger has missed a fundamental question: Where is the water needed to grow the food to feed future generations?"

The fishing sector has been plagued by the depletion of the fishing stock within the continental shelves due to pollution and destruction of reefs; and the inability of local fisherpersons to compete with foreign fishing trawlers that employ unsustainable fish harvesting. The Biological diversity is adversely affected as a result of greed and non-protection policies.

There has been a further widening of the gap between the labour force and the employed labour force, due to the shift to service oriented economies and reduced employment opportunities. The downward slide in the growth of the labour force has reached a crisis point.

In Mauritius, from 06-14 January 2005, thirty community leaders from 15 Islands of the United Nations Small Island Developing States met at the Community Vilaj dialogue space, created as part of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to share successful community practices and experiences and to explore avenues for informing policy, "recognizing that locally driven community actions are pillars of sustainable development in the effort to build long-term resilience".

The Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Antilles and the Diaspora within the SIDS, as custodians of their traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, affirm the role of indigenous community actions (enhancing cultural sensitivity) in sustainable development to build progressive economic, social and cultural resilience and poverty alleviation, and therefore, recommend:

- (1) The International Community recognize that the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Antilles have through their traditional knowledge developed innovative practices for their survival and that their communities should be the core of policy making, and sustained investment must be made to identify, broaden and enhance such indigenous initiatives.
- (2) States recognize the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Antilles to their property and ownership rights with respect to the lands and territories that they historically occupy, as well as the use of the lands to which they have traditionally had access for carrying out their traditional activities and for sustenance.
- (3) States recognize the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Antilles to food security, sustainable production and consumption of healthy and nutritious foods by using appropriate and sustainable technologies. That there is a need to ensure that Indigenous Peoples who depend on marine and terrestrial resources be supported in protecting those resources.
- (4) The Forum mobilizes recovery support for Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Antilles and the rest of the SIDS which are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, economic crisis and extreme poverty.
- (5) The Caribbean Antilles Indigenous Peoples Caucus & the Diaspora request the Forum to reaffirm its call to the UNDP to focus on implementing its policy of working with Indigenous Peoples at the country level, in the development and implementation of a policy on land tenure rights for Indigenous Peoples.
- (6) The Caribbean Antilles Indigenous Peoples Caucus & the Diaspora recognizing the important role of the Equator Initiative in the lives of indigenous communities, and in particular the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), call on UNDP to intensify its work in the communities.
- (7) The Forum call on the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to continue its support to the National Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Participatory Mechanisms of the Small Island Developing States through the CBD Island Biodiversity Project and Indigenous Peoples Programme, in the promotion of sustainable biodiversity in the Caribbean Antilles.
- 8) The Forum encourage the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to emphasize support for the responsible use of culturally appropriate agricultural inputs and technology, so as to protect the livelihoods of small scale traditional agriculture.
- (9) The Forum call upon the United Nations and other stakeholders to foster fair trade between the Caribbean Antilles and the Developed Countries, and a critical review of the rules and agreement of the World Trade Organization that adversely affect the Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Antilles.
- (10) The Forum encourage Developed Countries to provide support to the Caribbean Antilles so that Indigenous Peoples can access safe and affordable water, sanitation, culturally appropriate health care and education. In this regard, the Caribbean Antilles Indigenous Peoples Caucus & the Diaspora call on the Forum to reiterate its recommendation to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with the participation of other relevant United Nations Agencies and indigenous experts, to convene an Americas Hemispheric Workshop on the issue in the Caribbean in 2007.

(11) The Forum encourage the United Nations and the Organization of American States Systems and Donor Agencies, in particular the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank and other Regional Lending Institutions, to adopt pro-active Indigenous Peoples' policies and mechanisms through strong partnerships to eradicate poverty in Indigenous Peoples' communities in the Caribbean Antilles.

(12) The Forum encourage the Small Island Developing States Unit of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs to collaborate with the Small Island Developing States 2005 Mauritius Initiative (SIDS 2005 Mauritius Initiative), whose Secretariat is located in Saint Lucia, to create a multi-sectoral body to promote the exchange and networking of experiences on ways of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in Indigenous Peoples' communities in the SIDS.

(13) The Forum encourage the United Nations and Subsidiaries and other International Donor Agencies to provide funding to the United Nations Small Island Developing States Unit, to assist the Small Island Developing States 2005 Mauritius Initiative to hold a one week SIDS 2005 Mauritius Initiative Session in one of the territories of the SIDS in 2006, to increase the capacity and competence of Indigenous Peoples' Organizations in the SIDS.

(14) The Forum encourage the United Nations and Subsidiaries and other International Donor Agencies to assist the Small Island Developing States 2005 Mauritius Initiative to increase the capacity and competence for effectiveness and efficiency in managing strong and dynamic Indigenous Peoples Organizations by providing adequate access to Information Communication Technology, and the sharing of information through community networks.



Dr. Albert DeTerville, Executive Chairperson