



THE WORLD BANK

STATEMENT BY

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**"INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE WORLD BANK:
AN EVOLVING PARTNERSHIP"**

WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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Madam Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me, as a representative of the World Bank, to meet with all of you here and have the opportunity to speak. You have traveled from every part of the world to discuss this very important topic, and we are eager to hear your experiences and expectations. We are also here to seek your feedback on the World Bank's work on indigenous peoples and on its draft Indigenous Peoples policy. As we listen to the various interventions made by representatives of indigenous organizations and experts from around the world, we are convinced of the need to strengthen our cooperation and collaboration with all of you, to better serve the cause of indigenous peoples, to improve their access to health, education and other social services, and to ensure their full participation in the development process.

As you all know, the Bank has undergone major reforms in the past few years. In pursuing its primary mission of poverty reduction and sustainable development, the World Bank is firmly committed to addressing indigenous peoples issues. The World Bank recognizes that indigenous peoples are among the poorest and most excluded populations in many countries, and that they face discrimination, lack of access to essential resources and services, including justice, and have little voice in decisions that affect them.

Throughout this Working Group session, we have heard the strong messages addressed by indigenous peoples representatives to the donor community and international institutions. We have heard how development activities in the past have often resulted in negative impacts on indigenous peoples, including involuntary resettlement, restricted access to natural resources, lack of due process of law, and violations of human rights. We agree with you that the voices of the indigenous should be better heard and their opinions taken into account in the decisions which affect them.

We want to make it clear that the World Bank, as a development institution, is fully committed to addressing the poverty and voicelessness of indigenous peoples in the following ways:

- By financing development projects which benefit them;
- By engaging in policy dialogue with Borrower governments and other stakeholders;
- By applying safeguard policies; and
- By building a knowledge base on development issues to be shared with all stakeholders.

Projects and initiatives supporting indigenous peoples

More than 200 of the World Bank's current projects involve indigenous peoples issues. In many countries, the Bank is promoting the use of social funds, free-standing indigenous peoples projects and project components that are jointly designed with indigenous peoples and are aimed at supporting their own development priorities. The World Bank is also striving to ensure that the projects it finances in health, education, rural development and other sectors address the needs of indigenous peoples. It does so by ensuring that indigenous peoples benefit from such projects and that these benefits are culturally appropriate.

The World Bank is also working to strengthen the capacities of agencies responsible for providing services to indigenous peoples, as well as the capacity of indigenous communities and organizations to define and manage their own development programs.

Engaging in policy dialogue

The World Bank is engaged in policy dialogue with governments and other stakeholders on the sensitive and critical issues such as inclusion, social equity, gender, land and property rights, due process of law, and legal reforms, that are being raised during the discussions of this Working Group. Clearly, there is much work to be done to address these issues, and major political commitment is required at the national and international levels. Within the framework of its mandate as an intergovernmental development agency, the World Bank is committed to engaging its Borrower governments in these policy dialogues. Where appropriate, the World Bank also engages in dialogue with other stakeholders including multilateral and bilateral agencies, NGOs and the private sector.

One of the goals of this policy dialogue is to promote a development process that foster full respect for the dignity, human rights, cultures and well-being of indigenous peoples, thereby contributing to our mission of poverty reduction and sustainable development. Some of the specific issues pertaining to indigenous peoples included in this dialogue are land rights, customary and traditional rights over natural resources, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Safeguard policies

In addition to financing projects and promoting policy dialogue to benefit indigenous peoples, the World Bank is applying safeguard policies to ensure that

projects it finances avoid or mitigate adverse social and environmental impacts on these groups.

Specifically, the World Bank's Indigenous Peoples policy requires that:

- Indigenous peoples are given a voice in projects that affect them;
- Adverse impacts on indigenous peoples are avoided, and if not possible, minimized or mitigated; and
- Project benefits are tailored to the specific needs of indigenous peoples.

While the Bank's Indigenous Peoples policy has proven effective in many cases, there are other cases where ambiguities in the policy have produced poor results. To clarify these ambiguities and incorporate the lessons learned over the past two decades, the Bank is revising its Indigenous Peoples policy. The revised policy is intended to more clearly articulate the mandatory policy and procedural requirements to improve future policy implementation..

Since the beginning of the policy revision process, the Bank has consulted broadly with a range of stakeholders including governments, indigenous peoples organizations, non-governmental organizations, academic experts, and the donor community. The draft policy has been subject to wide discussion, both internally and externally, and is now being made available for your comment and review before its finalization and submission to the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors.

We look forward to discussing the World Bank's draft Indigenous Peoples policy in further detail with you at our consultation session on Thursday, July 26th.

We look forward to cooperating with all of you in the future. Thank you.