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**Eight Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**  
**New York, 18 – 29 May 2009**  
**Agenda Item 3(a)**  
**Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum**  
**on socioeconomic development**  
**Statement by Ms. Birgitte Feiring**

*Madame Chairperson,*

*The decision of the Forum to dedicate this session to follow-up and the analysis provided by the Secretariat<sup>1</sup> on the implementation regarding socio-economic development provide an excellent opportunity to take stock and reflect on progress achieved so far as well as remaining challenges. Seen over the span of years covered, from 2002 and till now, there is no doubt that the work of the Forum, together with indigenous organizations, UN agencies, governments and other partners has enlarged the knowledge-base regarding indigenous peoples' social and economic situation and has contributed to enhanced understanding and capacity to address their needs and priorities.*

*However, the ultimate question we need to ask is to what extent the socio-economic situation of indigenous peoples has actually improved on the ground; are there positive changes with regards to income levels, access to adequate education and health services, employment and traditional occupations? As also noted in the Secretariat's report, while progress has been made in overall coordination and awareness, the country-level implementation is still lacking behind and monitoring mechanisms are weak.*

*To some extent this is related to the broad character of some of the recommendations provided by the Forum, which again reflect the holistic nature of indigenous peoples' aspiration for self-determined development. This aspiration is not achieved over night; in most countries it will require profound legislative, policy and institutional changes, allocation of substantial budgets as well as capacity-building, training and awareness-raising. Let me mention, as an example, that the ILO has worked consistently since 2005 to assist implementation of the Forum's recommendations regarding the inclusion of indigenous peoples in poverty reduction strategies in Cambodia, Cameroon and Nepal - and we still feel that we have taken just the first steps of a long journey.*

*Hopefully, the more specific recommendations of the Forum, and the actions undertaken to implement them, will gradually contribute to the fulfillment of the overall aspiration for self-determined development. However, the risk is that such achievements are undermined by the effects of other factors, such as for example climate change and the current economic crisis. In other words, we may be winning the battles but losing the war.*

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<sup>1</sup> E/C.19/2009/7

*In this regard, Madam Chairperson, I would like to raise a few issues, which have come out very strongly from the work undertaken by the ILO over the last years. The first is the effect of the so-called Aid Effectiveness Agenda on indigenous peoples in developing countries.*

*In 2005, more than 100 countries, financial institutions and agencies adopted the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to guide international development assistance. This Declaration, among other things, stipulates that ownership should lie with the recipient country; support should be aligned with the policies, strategies and operational systems of the recipient countries, and, donors should harmonise and coordinate their efforts, thereby eventually eliminating their individual priorities and programmes.*

*While this approach unquestionably has advantages in terms of reducing transaction costs and fragmentation, extensive research by the ILO also indicates that it carries a number of inherent risks for further exclusion of indigenous peoples if specific safeguards are not developed. In practice, donors may harmonise policies to the lowest common denominator and they may provide sector-wide or direct budget support to governments that do not take into account indigenous peoples' needs and priorities. Moreover, staff at the country-level might have little knowledge and capacity about indigenous peoples' rights and not feel confident in dealing with this topic. Therefore, the risk is that indigenous peoples will further lose visibility and their rights and priorities be ignored as development cooperation becomes more centralized and government-centered through the Aid Effectiveness Agenda.*

*This is a concern for indigenous peoples, UN agencies as well as donors. Dialogue among all these stakeholders is therefore crucial in order to make the Aid Effectiveness Agenda work for - and not against - indigenous peoples' rights. The Forum has previously addressed this in some of its specific recommendations but as the concern persists, there may be again an opportunity to address this in the context of next year's thematic focus on Development with identity.*

*Madam Chairperson, this brings me to the second issue; how do we ultimately measure whether we achieve the desired results for indigenous peoples. In short, how do we measure impact?*

*Over the last years, the ILO has been engaged in several attempts at national, regional and international levels to define indicators relevant for indigenous peoples, including in the areas of measuring progress towards the achievement of the MDGs and the implementation of indigenous peoples' rights. While these efforts have been successful in defining comprehensive lists of relevant indicators, it has been more difficult to make them operational. Apart from the work undertaken in the Latin American region in the context of censuses, very little systematic data collection is undertaken regarding indigenous peoples' socio-economic situation.*

*When revisiting the earlier recommendations of the Forum it is clear that some of these are broad and refer to the general implementation of the rights of indigenous peoples as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and in the ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, while others have a more specific and time-bound nature.*

*I wonder if this differentiation can assist us to better structure our work and monitor its impact. Can we, for example use the UNDRIP as the basis for developing a set of specific and time-bound targets related to the overall implementation of the Declaration? And would it be possible to define a simple and commonly used set of structural, process*

*and impact indicators linked to existing mechanisms and processes of monitoring and data gathering that would help ensuring institutional anchorage and sustainability of our efforts ? This would also include the recommendations formulated by the ILO supervisory bodies that monitor the implementation of ILO Convention No. 169 in the 20 countries that have ratified it.*

*Madam Chairperson, I may have raised more questions than answers in this intervention, but I want to assure you of the commitment of the ILO to keep working with the Forum, the ITSG and, very importantly, with governments and indigenous organizations to explore possible answers to these questions and to continue to pursue impact through the implementation) of indigenous peoples' rights at international and at country-level.*