

ITALY

Statement

by

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**of the
Italian Delegation to the
First Meeting of the United Nations Permanent Forum
on Indigenous Issues**

Item 6: general debate

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(check against delivery)

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

First of all, on behalf of the Italian delegation, allow me to congratulate you on your election. We are pleased to be able to participate in this historic first meeting of the "UN Forum on Indigenous Issues". We trust that, with the contribution of everyone involved, the proceedings of this Forum may become a basic moment of connection for all the activities of intergovernmental organizations addressing indigenous affairs.

Mr. Chairman,

Italy is a country where the variety of environments, climates, products and processes were shaped by the diversity of the local and traditional cultures contributing to its essence. A law is currently in force which officially recognizes the languages of 11 peoples and local communities, among which: Sardinian, Provençal, Ladino, Friulano and Occitano. Similar proposals are now being taken into consideration for the recognition of Romanes and Hebrew.

Moreover, very strict laws and regulations are in force regarding traditional food, such as the D.O.P. (Denomination of Protected Origin) and DOCG (Denomination of Controlled and Guaranteed Origin). Such regulations are a model, within the European Union, for the protection of the intellectual property of traditional products and processes. We are therefore sincerely interested in sharing such basic juridical instruments with Indigenous peoples and cultures who have, like us, elaborated traditional processes and products needing protection from any possible imitation, sophistication and genetic pollution.

The possible manipulation of living resources not only imply a damage to the peoples, local communities and cultures that created such processes, but also to the consumer, who runs the risk of acquiring goods, the safety level of which is no longer guaranteed by centuries of unending testing and application of the traditional techniques.

Mr. Chairman,

We recognize that environmental, cultural and linguistic diversity exists and is constituted by innumerable distinct components, including indigenous peoples, nations, tribes and local communities.

Cultural and Environmental Diversities are assets of equal consequence for the continuation of life on the planet and to achieve the purpose we all pursue: cultural wellbeing.

Maintaining cultural and linguistic diversities allows peoples to know, evaluate and reproduce environmental diversity. Traditional knowledge, which is holistic, is an advanced technological expression able to promote the correct management of the environment, as well as the production of safe goods and the implementation of safe processes.

We recognize that each cultural diversity develops its own way of life in a specific spiritual, ecological, territorial and legal environment, and that each People defines its own identity by means of laws, regulations, obligations, rights, traditions, customs, languages, forms of communication, ceremonies and behaviors establishing internal as well as external relations with both living and non-living entities.

All these elements, as well as the connections they imply, could be considered as best practices aimed at Mother Earth's sustainable development. This may also be considered as the possible

contribution that our country intends to make for the full realization of the programs of sustainable development and the success of the Johannesburg Summit.

Mr. Chairman,

We also express our interest in that the Draft Declaration on Indigenous Peoples may be adopted by the General Assembly before the end of the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples and that a recognition of Indigenous Peoples as peoples, as well as of their collective and individual rights, may soon be achieved.

We also completely agree with the idea of extending the decade of Indigenous Peoples of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

We have heard a number of statements on the future of this Forum and on the financial contributions needed for its future work. Italy is the 6th contributor country in the United Nations system and we therefore support the idea of a permanent secretariat, whose members should be, for the most part, representatives of Indigenous Peoples. The Secretariat should be able to take advantage of an adequate portion of the UN ordinary budget.

We ask the Forum to evaluate the opportunity to make use of the document "Draft Resolution of Rome: Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Diversity", the object of which is the establishment of a Convention for the Protection of Cultural Diversity.

We also propose the creation of a holistic database, structured around the topic of cultural diversity and aimed at the promotion of traditional knowledge, as well as its connections with the sustainable use of biodiversity, the system of bioresources, fair rights, best practises and racism. The said database will be realized with the participation of Indigenous peoples, while the use of all collected documents will be aimed at the negotiation between parties, at contributing to the solution of local and territorial conflicts, at elaborating new collective rights of intellectual properties.

We are aware that the process we face is a complex and articulated one. We trust, however, that, in the future, the issues of Indigenous Peoples may be taken into consideration in a context which is wider than the one of Human Rights, namely a context of Cultural Diversity rights.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.