

**Statement by the Holy See Delegation
Msgr Kuriakose Bharanikulangara, Counsellor of the Permanent Observer of the Holy See**

**Economic and Social Council
8th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

Agenda item 4: Human rights

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Madam Chair,

My delegation welcomes this opportunity to address the eighth session of the Permanent Forum and congratulates you Madam Chair, and the *Bureau* as well as all the Members of the Permanent Forum and wishes you well in your work.

The Holy See remains actively involved in the activities related to the indigenous peoples all over the world. My delegation continues to reiterate its support for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and continues to foster greater cooperation and understanding of the needs of indigenous peoples. We note the recent historic meeting of Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican with the National Chief of the Assembly of the First Nations and the representatives from Communities of First Nations of Canada.

On agenda item 4 (Human rights), the Holy See is pleased to note that after the 60th anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration, this theme has been included in the deliberations of the Forum. The promotion of human rights remains one of the cornerstones for comprehensive development of the indigenous peoples. Without justice there is no peace and development; where human dignity is violated, there cannot be peaceful co-existence. Last year Pope Benedict XVI during his address to the General Assembly underlined that recognition of the unity of the human family, and attention to the innate dignity of every man and woman should be characteristic of the activities of the United Nations and other international instruments. It is the hope of my

delegation that fundamental human rights of every indigenous person be completely respected all over the world.

The fundamental right to exist should be guaranteed for all human persons and communities, especially the indigenous peoples. My delegation is deeply saddened by concerns echoed in this hall in regard to the growing number of murders of indigenous persons, especially of women and girls, their being subjected to inhuman conditions, forced labor and trafficking.

The right to property ownership and respect for the identity and culture of the indigenous peoples should be promoted. The Holy See continues to be concerned about the forced migration of indigenous peoples and appropriation of their land by corporations and public enterprises. Plans of extractive industries and multinational corporations, though presenting an opportunity for economic enrichment, should not come at the expense of the rights of the indigenous peoples to lands, territories and resources. In such endeavors due respect for their culture and inclusive consultation of their representatives should be promoted. In this regard, the Holy See published a document entitled, *"Towards a better distribution of land: the challenge of agrarian reform"*, in which problems of the expropriation of the land of indigenous populations were addressed. The document called for respect for the community property of Indigenous Populations and stressed the importance of following a just labour policy towards them.

As the affects of the ongoing global financial crisis continue to be felt in all corners of the globe, the needs of impoverished indigenous groups should continue to receive the necessary support so that indigenous peoples can live in keeping with their innate human dignity.

Thank you, Madam Chair.