



The World Bank



## Economic and Social Development of Indigenous Peoples

Statement by

**Stephen F. Lintner**

Senior Advisor  
Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network  
The World Bank

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates:

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the World Bank on the Forum's mandated area of economic and social development. We have listened carefully today to the comments made by our distinguished colleagues on this fundamental aspect of Indigenous Peoples' concerns.

Our Vice President Ian Johnson spoke at length yesterday and gave an update on the current status of World Bank actions in support of Indigenous Peoples, so I will not give a long intervention today.

However, given the central significance of this mandated area to the World Bank's institutional mandate, I would like to share a few thoughts beyond the safeguarding aspect reflected in our policy, in order to place our commitment to indigenous concerns in the broader context of effective economic and social development.

As an institution committed to poverty reduction and sustainable development, the World Bank cannot ignore the data which shows a high correlation between poverty and being an indigenous person. Many of the estimated 200 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide living in more than 70 countries have faced problems in terms of access to basic services and conditions essential to maintain their ways of life.

The World Bank believes that effective economic and social development is best achieved by ensuring a foundation of security, empowerment, and opportunity for all people. While much of our dialogue with you has focused on the evolution of our Indigenous Peoples policy, the policy is only one instrument of engagement. We are also working programmatically to help Indigenous Peoples further their development objectives, in line with the principles of security, empowerment, and opportunity. Our strategic approach incorporates three fundamental elements:

- Strengthening the technical capacity for self-managed sustainable development of indigenous leaders and their organizations;
- Creating a learning partnership among indigenous organizations, national governments and donor agencies to share experience and best practices in the area of Indigenous Peoples development policies and programs; and
- Financing specific operations in education, health, rural development, natural resource management, biodiversity conservation and cultural heritage which address the needs and include the active participation of Indigenous Peoples.

In addition, the World Bank is working on development of a "Grant Facility for Indigenous Peoples" as discussed by Ian Johnson in his earlier presentation.

Mr. Chairman:

Our growing portfolio of projects involving Indigenous Peoples is designed to help reduce poverty and promote culturally appropriate development among indigenous groups, including by:

- Supporting indigenous capacity building for self-development, based on cultural heritage and knowledge;
- Alleviating poverty among Indigenous Peoples by ensuring their continued access to culturally appropriate educational, health, agricultural and other services;
- Designing projects to support land and judicial reform, build indigenous human capital (education, health, and social protection) and strengthen the social capital of indigenous organizations and communities;
- Strengthening and improving the policy and institutional frameworks affecting Indigenous Peoples and their relations with other sectors of national society;
- Building a knowledge base on development and indigenous issues shared with all stakeholders, including a Development Gateway internet portal;
- Demonstrating the important role that Indigenous Peoples can play in the management of fragile ecosystems and biodiversity conservation; and
- Disseminating the experience learned from such indigenous development initiatives to national governments and the international donor community.

In addition, recognizing the fundamental importance of customary rights to ancestral lands and use of natural resources, many World Bank-supported projects have included components that address issues of indigenous land tenure security and natural resource rights, ranging from technical assistance for review and design of legislative frameworks, to training in land rights and titling procedures, to direct project support for the identification, demarcation and legalization of indigenous lands.

We are also working to advance our dialogue with borrower governments on measures to improve the welfare of Indigenous Peoples in economically and culturally appropriate ways, including by assisting borrowers to collect and disaggregate economic data to better reflect indigenous groups' economic circumstances and access to basic services.

We are developing training and research programs to increase World Bank staff and borrower government understanding of the importance of issues related to Indigenous Peoples and cultural diversity in poverty reduction programs and the national sustainable development process.

Mr. Chairman:

We will take the views we have heard reflected here back to Washington and to our country teams, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue with you and your counterparts on the best ways forward to achieve effective economic and social development for Indigenous Peoples everywhere.

Thank you.