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## **BRAZIL**

**United Nations  
Economic and Social Council  
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Third session  
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Statement by Mr. Frederico S. Duque Estrada Meyer,  
Minister Plenipotentiary,  
Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations**

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Mr. Chairperson,

We have repeatedly reaffirmed our commitment to the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of Brazil's indigenous peoples. Over 200 ethnic groups compose the rich ethnic variety of indigenous cultures all over the country, a fundamental element of the Brazilian socio-cultural diversity.

The recognition of indigenous peoples' original rights over the lands they traditionally occupy is a constitutional precept in Brazil. More than 11% of our national territory – the equivalent to roughly 1 million square kilometers – is reserved for the permanent use and fruition of the indigenous peoples, and almost 70% of the lands in Brazil have been demarcated. The Government of Brazil has expressed its willingness to conclude all the procedures for the demarcation of indigenous lands by the end of 2006.

In addition, educational and health programs tailored to meet the needs of indigenous peoples have been implemented, with the effective participation of indigenous representatives in the policy-making.

The Government of Brazil has made efforts to integrate in the public educational system many of the indigenous schools that still exist on an informal basis. In 2003, more than 350 were regulated and can receive government funding. Indigenous leaders have been entitled to control the use of funding for indigenous education. We are committed to providing to indigenous peoples quality education, which is differentiated, bilingual and intercultural, and which contributes to the strengthening of the autonomy of the indigenous communities. Progress has been made in increasing the access of indigenous peoples to higher education. The Government of Brazil has established a program entitled "Diversity in the University", which

aims at combating social, ethnic and racial exclusion and improving the opportunities for indigenous peoples.

In the field of health, our policy towards indigenous peoples also devotes great attention to their socio-cultural diversity. Decentralization, universality, equity, local participation and social control are the guiding principles for providing appropriate medical services. Actions in the field have been implemented through a productive partnership between different levels of government and NGOs to ensure a systematic approach to healthcare for indigenous peoples. An element that has required special consideration is the deployment of staff capable of working in intercultural environments.

Last month, the ILO Convention n. 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries was promulgated and it is in full effect in the Brazilian legal system. This is an important conceptual advancement, which paves the way for strengthening the technical cooperation between Brazil and ILO in the field.

We stress the need for increasing international cooperation to facilitate the channeling of funds to projects that help to promote the economic and social development of indigenous peoples in developing countries, particularly to enhance capacity building.

We are actively engaged in the drafting of much-awaited United Nations and Inter-American Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We acknowledge the importance of this session's theme on "indigenous women". In Brazil, especially this year, all public organs are developing activities aimed at creating conditions for the full participation of women in society, in particular indigenous women. We will shortly be addressing in Brazil, during the first national conference of the rights of the women, the challenges related to the specificity of the indigenous women.

We are pleased that next session, Mr. Eduardo Aguiar de Almeida, a former head of the Brazilian Indigenous Agency (FUNAI), will be among the Forum's members.

Let me express to the members and secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues my Delegation's appreciation for their efforts in advancing and consolidating the prominent role of the Forum in the United Nations system. Its unique and innovative features allow its members to offer a decisive contribution towards meeting the aspirations of indigenous peoples. And we trust that this third session will allow for further progress on the coordination of the activities of UN bodies and agencies with relation to indigenous issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.