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**STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME  
(UNEP)**

**UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES, 14<sup>TH</sup> SESSION**

**Agenda Item 4 Half day discussion on the Pacific region**

**New York, 21 April 2015**

Madame Chair, UNEP would like to provide the Forum with a short update on some of the work that UNEP has been undertaking over some years with its collaborating center GRID Arendal based in Norway and Canada and which addresses indigenous peoples and local communities.

One of our most successful projects is the Many Strong Voices (MSV) programme which brings together people and organizations in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the Arctic to take collaborative and strategic actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation at the local, national, regional and international levels. Its goal is the wellbeing, security, and sustainability of communities and provides a platform for people in these regions to tell their stories to the world.

Societies and livelihoods in both the Arctic and SIDS are particularly vulnerable to climate change because of their close ties to land and sea environments. While communities in both regions have adapted to changing conditions in the past, it is not clear that those experiences and abilities will suffice to deal with ongoing social and environmental changes introduced by climate change. These regions are barometers of global environmental change. They are considered critical testing grounds for the ideas and programmes that will strengthen the adaptive capacities of human societies confronting climate change. <http://www.manvstrongvoices.org/>

MSV partners worked hard before and during the UNFCCC COP 20 in Lima, Peru to advance the argument for a human rights based approach within the climate change negotiations. The Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) is a key MSV partner and coordinates the Human Rights and Climate Change Working Group (HRCCWG). During the 2014 climate change negotiations the HRCCWG worked with the Indigenous Peoples Caucus and other partners to spread the message about the importance of human rights to climate justice.

They did this by outreach to delegates and calling for references to human rights, rights of indigenous peoples, and gender in both the COP decision and in the

Paris agreement. A sign on letter calling for human rights to be fully integrated in the Paris agreement was drafted and nearly 250 groups signed, including MSV. They also organized the first Human Rights Day at the UNFCCC. Another MSV partner, the Mary Robinson Foundation, secured a commitment from the French government that next year's Human Rights Day will be officially recognized by the COP Presidency and Secretariat.

MSV has been starting initiatives on health, covering human and environmental health impacts of climate change, while connecting more with disaster risk reduction. That includes post-disaster gender-based violence (e.g. Haiti) and ensuring that human rights and inclusiveness are part of better integrating climate change and disaster-related work.

Thank you, Madame Chair.