

Mr. Magga
Introductory Remarks
Agenda Item: Development



Good morning,

1. In commencing the agenda item for development today, I want to draw your attention to some significant developments.
2. Firstly, I was very pleased to learn that the United Nations development group has prioritised the operationalization of indigenous issues at the country level among its 2003/2004 priorities. Also, the inter-Agency Support Group has worked hard to integrate indigenous issues into the guidelines for the common country assessment and the UN Development Framework. These are significant events in our efforts to ensure that indigenous issues are mainstreamed within the international system.
3. Secondly, I want to report to you briefing about the GLOBAL FORUM OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY which was facilitated by the Bureau of the Permanent Forum with the financial assistance of the Canadian, Swiss and Norwegian governments.
4. The Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society was one of the largest official parallel events of the World Summit on the Information Society. The Global Forum was attended by representatives of 6 Member States, 18 government departments (of Member States), 9 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, 12 private sector participants and 90 indigenous and non-governmental organizations. A total of 286 persons attended the Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society. The Global Forum examined both potentials and obstacles to the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples in the Information Society. Obstacles included (but were not limited to), lack of basic community infrastructure, limited access to modern technologies and the urgent need for gender and age sensitive capacity building. Potentials included (but were not limited to) access to new market-places, increased indigenous networking (both regionally and internationally), new strategies to revitalize and pass on culture and languages, and the opportunity to fully participate in the new information and connectivity revolution facing humanity.
5. The report of the Global Forum is available as a background document for this Third Session. I am requesting that the Members of the Forum familiarize yourselves with the indigenous declaration and programme of action and examine which recommendations can be supported by the Permanent Forum. I also seek the advice from indigenous representatives. It would be extremely useful, as we worked towards the final stage of the World Summit on the Information Society, if we can push some of these recommendations through the international system, to advance "connectivity" for indigenous peoples and ensure that we participate in this new information revolution sweeping humankind.

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