



Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

**United Nations, New York
12-23 May 2003**

UNDP Statement on Item 4(a) economic and social development

**13 May 2003
5 PM
Conference Room II**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Permanent Forum;

Distinguished representatives of indigenous peoples organizations.

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Development Programme is honoured to participate in the second session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. We welcome the Permanent Forum as a major contribution to the UN system and commit ourselves to work in partnership with indigenous peoples organizations, UN agencies, governments, and civil society organizations towards implementing its recommendations, particularly in the areas of social and economic development, human rights and environment. We welcome the establishment of the Forum's Secretariat and look forward to working with them.

As many of you already know, UNDP is the global development network of the United Nations. It advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with governments, civil society partners, representatives of the private sectors and other national actors to help them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges.

UNDP works under the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs are an ambitious agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives that world leaders agreed on at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. The eight goals represent a partnership between the developed countries and the developing countries determined to create an environment-at the national and global levels alike-which is conducive to development and the elimination of poverty.

Achieving these goals requires the contribution of all development actors around the world. And UNDP sees indigenous peoples and their organizations as one of those partners that can provide the energy and creativity to making them happen. As stated in its policy of engagement, UNDP recognizes that ensuring the engagement of indigenous peoples and their organizations is critical in preventing and resolving conflict, enhancing democratic governance, reducing poverty and sustainably managing the environment.

We hope indigenous peoples will engage in the process of achieving the MDGs, through various channels like - the development of the MDG Country Reports that monitor the progress of the goals; and most importantly the campaign, which is essential to carrying forward the message of what's at stake. Indigenous peoples'

participation in this process is therefore key and UNDP is committed to ensuring that indigenous peoples are engaged.

As coordinator for the Millennium Development Goals, UNDP looks forward to working in close collaboration with you in achieving these ambitious goals, in jointly developing campaigns at local and national levels as well as in partnering operationally. We hope to encourage improved dialogue between our country offices and your peoples in both making the MDGs happen and implementing the UNDP policy of engagement on indigenous peoples.

The Roundtable on *Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on the MDGs* co-sponsored with the Tebtebba Foundation of the Philippines held during WSSD last September is an example of our efforts to raise awareness of the MDGs among indigenous peoples, stimulate debate around the issues and encourage indigenous peoples' participation in the campaign. At this roundtable, Indigenous peoples emphasized that when implementing the MDGs, indigenous peoples' visions of development – and their knowledge and sustainable practices that have been key to safeguarding the environment for centuries – should be taken into account.

The UNDP presence and coordinating role at the country level and the trust we enjoy with governments and civil society partners enables us to play what we believe to be a unique role in bringing together different stakeholders in development processes. For example in Ecuador, UNDP, with other partners, was able to broker a dialogue between indigenous peoples and their organizations and the government who were at odds over increased prices on basic services.

Furthermore, while we realize the need for increased attention to be given to indigenous peoples' concerns worldwide, we also recognize that many of the changes that have taken place with regard to indigenous peoples in the international arena have been a direct result of your extraordinary struggles and movements.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regarding the recommendations made by the Permanent Forum, I am pleased to announce that UNDP will make a contribution that will address the call for disaggregated data as key to empowering and enabling indigenous peoples to raise their development concerns and the importance of free prior informed consent.

UNDP is currently considering commissioning a study on free prior and informed consent vis-a-vis development and supporting the collection of disaggregated data on indigenous peoples. However, it is important to note that pushing for information on indigenous peoples will require advocacy and brokering because of potential political tensions. Moreover, UNDP calls on governments to gather data on indigenous peoples including further disaggregation of indigenous women, youth and children, and stands ready to assist them in this effort.

UNDP understands the importance of disaggregated data for development. National and regional Human Development Reports (HDRs) have been produced in over 135 countries. These policy advocacy documents, supported by UNDP, aim to take stock of human development at country-level and to stimulate public debate

and political attention to most pressing development priorities through their alternative people-centred analysis and recommendations.

One critical feature of human development analysis is the examination of trends in major human development dimensions at the lowest possible levels of disaggregation. Some regional and national HDRs have included data disaggregated by ethnic groupings, language groupings, gender, geographic regions (including down to the very local level of municipality), age and many other groupings. Through disaggregated data, both quantitative and qualitative, these reports are able to better identify disparities and pockets of deprivation and discrimination and formulate policies to address these constraints to human development progress. This kind of data collection is to be promoted and fostered.

In the next two–three years, UNDP’s Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific has proposed to develop an Asian Regional Human Development Report focusing on Indigenous Peoples.

The proposed topic for the global HDR for 2004 is on cultural diversity and human development. It will focus on exploring issues related to building inclusive societies and managing diversity, and will therefore offer a key platform for Indigenous people’s organization to voice their concerns and recommendations.

In both national and global HDRs, UNDP is committed to ensure the participation of indigenous peoples in the process and hopes to work in partnership with you and your organizations.

Because UNDP's policy of engagement on indigenous peoples is underpinned by the human rights framework, that it endorses the principle of free prior and informed consent in development programmes and that it recognizes indigenous peoples' right to development, UNDP supports the establishment of a working group on free prior and informed consent; the drafting of a study and the establishment of participatory research guidelines.

Another issue of relevance to indigenous peoples in which UNDP is developing a new initiative is the area of land rights. Given the increasing importance of the issue, coupled with the fact that UNDP does not currently have an organizational policy on land rights, we are currently engaged in preparing a draft policy guidance note on land rights. It will be specifically linked to UNDP programming requirements and will clearly set out the key issues and challenges with respect to land rights. Practical in orientation, the policy note will enable Country Offices to develop concrete initiatives.

In follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Equator Initiative, in which several Indigenous groups participated, is working to create a global movement to reduce poverty along with the conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity.

This will be accomplished through a three part programme consisting of the prestigious award to recognize local achievements, learning exchange grants to foster South-South capacity building, and the generation and sharing of knowledge to influence policy.

Since WSSD, the Equator Initiative has also been working to capture the lessons from community sustainable development models and disseminate them widely. These lessons will contribute to policy development in areas of poverty reduction, environmental management and biodiversity conservation. Workshops with awardees are being organized this year to encourage learning exchanges.

Another follow up to WSSD has been the participation of UNDP to a partnership launched by the Danish Government and Greenland Home Rule on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Sustainable Development. The partnership is aimed at enhancing the capacity of indigenous peoples to influence policy processes and decision-making in sustainable development, while promoting knowledge sharing between donor agencies and indigenous peoples. Work is currently underway in developing the partnership's guiding principles and plan of action.

In efforts to implement UNDP's policy of engagement and head towards achieving the MDGs; the development of programmes aimed at indigenous peoples is key and requires further advocacy and support.

In Asia, a regional programme is currently being developed. Participating countries include Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Its focus is on strengthening policy dialogue on indigenous peoples' rights and development in the region.

HURIST, a human rights strengthening programme jointly implemented by UNDP and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), is in the process of developing three pilot projects focusing on building the capacity of indigenous peoples and their organizations at the country level.

These initiatives combined with national development programme activities and small grants programmes much like the GEF/Small Grants Programme are designed to address the needs of local communities and provide a range of channels for UNDP support to indigenous peoples.

For example, in Guatemala, the UNDP country office has recently established a committee to analyze the UNDP policy of engagement on indigenous peoples and to apply its recommendations in the Guatemalan context. The main purpose of the committee is to develop a concrete office policy that could be transversally implemented in the various UNDP programmes. Such examples/pilots/initiatives are to be emulated.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If we are making progress in increasing the involvement of indigenous people's organizations in the development debate, we still have a long road ahead of us and multiple political and financial challenges to address. Key to working together will be making use of each other's comparative advantages; expertise and knowledge. We hope that through initiatives like the Equator Initiative and the HURIST Programme, we can strengthen support to indigenous peoples' communities and their initiatives. Furthermore, the national and regional human development reports and the MDG Reports provide unique opportunities for data to be disaggregated and disseminated. These tools and mechanisms can provide possible entry points for carrying forward the recommendations of the Forum.

Lastly, we also recommend that the Forum members consider achieving the MDGs as a key item within its recommendations for the upcoming year.

We look forward to the deliberations of the next two weeks which will lead in a fruitful and successful partnership between Indigenous people's organizations and UNDP.

Unfortunately, other commitments request that I leave you but my colleague Alejandra Pero, whom you all, I believe, well know, will stay with you and respond to any question and comment.

I thank you.