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Item 6

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UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

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ASIA CAUCUS STATEMENT:

Agenda item 6: Comprehensive dialogue with six United Nations agencies and funds

**United Nations Development Program**

Madam Chair:

We commend UNDP for its Regional Indigenous Peoples Program (RIPP) for Asia, which is being implemented in partnership with indigenous organizations. This program has been effectively addressing critical concerns of indigenous peoples such as resource management, women's empowerment, access to justice and strengthening of local governance, among others. The partnership of UNDP-RIPP with indigenous organizations is key to the success of its program implementation. We also commend UNDP for its Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility, especially its capacity building program.

On the other hand, UNDP programs in general, especially at the country level, have yet to mainstream indigenous issues and concerns in partnership with indigenous peoples and organizations. We are concerned that some of the projects are actually undermining indigenous institutions, particularly by reinforcing local government structures that are not serving the interests of indigenous peoples. Other projects are also being implemented without thorough consultation and effective participation of indigenous organizations and communities.

As a powerful UN agency, especially at the country level, UNDP has a critical role in promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly with regards to self-determined development. However, much has yet to be done in this regard. In particular, the provisions of Free Prior and Informed Consent, as reiterated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, should already be fully integrated into the program of UNDP, and adopted by its partners. UNDP can take the lead in conducting dissemination and awareness raising activities on FPIC, especially targeting governments, investors and developers.

We make the following recommendations:

- UNDP country offices should develop focused programs for indigenous peoples at the country level, in partnership with indigenous organizations. They should ensure the direct participation of indigenous peoples in the planning, designing, implementation and monitoring of UNDP projects affecting indigenous peoples in the way that UNDP-RIPP has done. Likewise, indigenous representatives should be included in UNDP structures dealing with programs and projects affecting indigenous peoples. At the level of UNDP country programs, Indigenous Advisory Bodies, to be composed of leaders endorsed by

indigenous organizations, should be set up to ensure that UNDP programs relating to indigenous peoples are appropriate and respect the rights of indigenous peoples.

- UNDP country offices should ensure that their programs are consistent with UNDRIP, and that there is high level of awareness of UNDRIP amongst their personnel and decision makers. Likewise, they should undertake activities to promote the UNDRIP to their partners. This should include country workshops for government, NGOs, indigenous communities, other UN agencies, and other stakeholders on UNDRIP and special workshops on Free, Prior and Informed Consent and self determined development.
- UNDP should initiate the establishment of independent monitoring mechanisms on the implementation of Free Prior and Informed Consent, especially in relation to development programs and projects affecting indigenous peoples, and more generally respect for the rights of indigenous peoples in such programs and projects.
- UNDP country offices should raise their concerns on violations of the rights of indigenous peoples in the implementation of development projects, such as violations of the collective rights of indigenous peoples over their land and resources, among others.
- UNDP should work to reinforce or strengthen existing indigenous social, cultural and political structures and systems, ensuring the full and effective participation of women, instead of introducing or developing alternative social systems and structures without the collaboration of indigenous peoples or empowering local authorities who do not represent indigenous peoples.
- UNDP should increase funding for RIPP to sustain, strengthen, and expand its program.
- UNDP should look at best practices of the UNDP Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility in Bangladesh, particularly its Capacity-Building and Healthcare components, and apply them in other areas where appropriate.
- UNDP should provide financial support for indigenous peoples' institutions and organizations, especially in the cases of the most marginalized groups, to build their capacity in addressing their issues, including the protection of their rights.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

GROUTAM KUMAR CHAKMA