

UNITAR Statement

2009 Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Thank you. UNITAR is pleased to participate in this eighth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The UNITAR Training Programme to Enhance the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Capacities of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives was created in 2000 based on the requests of indigenous peoples' representatives from around the world at consultations in Geneva, and based on the recommendations of UN Special Rapporteurs, to provide advanced training in conflict analysis and negotiation to representatives of indigenous peoples.

With strengthened tools of conflict analysis, negotiation and relationship-building, indigenous representatives are further equipped to engage in dialogue on issues to address the priorities of their communities. The training aims to strengthen indigenous representatives' abilities to negotiate to improve the situations of their peoples in all of the areas under the mandate of the Permanent Forum: health, education, culture, environment, economic and social development, and human rights.

As conflict over land and resource issues, and marginalization from political and economic processes are two of the most challenging areas indigenous peoples continue to face, the majority of cases and negotiation simulations in the training focus on these issues. The training programme reviews both rights-based and problem-solving negotiation processes to strengthen the capacity of indigenous representatives to analyze root causes of conflict and engage in constructive dialogue with Governments, the private sector and other communities to resolve conflict in a mutually beneficial and sustainable manner.

The training programme invites UN Special Rapporteurs and Permanent Forum members and other senior indigenous experts to conduct sessions on successful negotiation processes on land and resource issues, among other areas. Specific land and resource situations are presented by indigenous experts from different regions high-lighting precedent-setting cases and remaining challenges. Initiatives to facilitate dialogue between indigenous representatives, Governments and the private sector are also highlighted.

Regional organization mechanisms and other dialogue processes are reviewed. Senior indigenous experts and UN system staff members present on UN and international conventions, mechanisms and policies that promote and protect human rights and facilitate dialogue among concerned parties.

UNITAR actively seeks the participation and contribution of indigenous women for each training programme both as resource persons and as participants. Women compose 40% of training participants with the aim of building on their capacity to analyze sources of conflict, identify the interests and concerns of the various parties involved, and engage in dialogue and negotiation to improve the condition of life for their communities in all sectors.

Indigenous experts and former participants are consulted in the design and planning of each UNITAR training to ensure that the programme is addressing key concerns and evolving issues faced by indigenous peoples. Their advice is sought on cases to include from respective regions, recommendations for top resource persons as well as on participants and organizations that could best benefit from and contribute to the programmes.

The current UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, who has taught previously in all eleven UNITAR international and regional training programmes, will continue to contribute to the training programmes, now in his function as Special Rapporteur, to discuss his mandate and activities, and to engage with participants from various regions. The UN Special Rapporteur on the permanent sovereignty of indigenous peoples over natural resources has also presented sessions on her mandate and activities to the international training programme. The reports of both Special Rapporteurs are provided in the participant handbook of readings distributed at each training session.

The 2009 Regional Training Programme to Enhance the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Capacities of Indigenous Peoples' Representatives is planned for the Pacific region in the third quarter. UNITAR is grateful for the support from the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden which is making this much-requested regional training programme possible. Thank you.