

*Check against delivery*

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
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**Statement by**

**H.E. Ambassador Carmen Maria Gallardo  
Chairperson, Commission on the Status of Women**

Madam Chairperson,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address the fifth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in my capacity as Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for its contribution to the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission, in its 60 years of work, has played a major role in promoting gender equality and empowerment of all women, including indigenous women.

**Distinguished delegates,**

Indigenous women make significant contributions within their families, communities, nations and at the international level. At the same time, they face multiple forms of discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity. The Beijing Platform for Action identified indigenous women among those who encounter particular barriers to full equality and advancement, both as women and as members of their communities. They are particularly vulnerable to violence and discrimination and face additional barriers to enjoyment of their human rights simply because they are indigenous women. The Platform recommended actions on their behalf in several critical areas of concern, including poverty, education, health, decision-making and the environment. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session reiterated these concerns and expanded actions aimed at supporting indigenous women in overcoming challenges in areas such as education, training and research, the elimination of violence, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action acknowledged that indigenous women continued to face many obstacles and challenges, which included multiple forms of discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity, and the impact of globalization and environmental degradation. Comprehensive measures must be implemented to address all forms of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion that keep indigenous women from a full enjoyment of their rights.

The Commission on the Status of Women recognizes that profound inequalities exist between indigenous women and other groups and that addressing these inequalities through the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of General Assembly is essential to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

#### **Distinguished delegates,**

Let me now turn to this session's special theme. Redefining the Millennium Development Goals provides an opportunity to incorporate the concerns of indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women, into the MDGs. The MDGs offer a strategic framework to more fully integrate the goals of the Platform for Action and of CEDAW, which provide an important human rights-based approach to the development agenda for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, including indigenous women.

The explicit reference to gender equality and women's empowerment in one MDG is an opportunity to implement the national commitments to empower women made over the last two decades. Due to the cross-cutting nature of gender equality, it is also critical that gender perspectives be fully integrated into the implementation and monitoring of all the other goals associated with the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. The fact that the MDGs specify concrete and time-bound targets and indicators and a reporting mechanism, provides a unique impetus to monitor progress on gender equality and women's empowerment at different levels and to integrate further analysis of the situation of indigenous women.

#### **Distinguished delegates,**

In addressing the challenges of the many serious obstacles that remain to the full implementation of MDG3, it is important to acknowledge the interconnectedness of MDG3 to all other MDGs, as well as the need to ensure that the gender mainstreaming strategy is effectively utilized. All national development strategies, such as poverty reduction strategies, sector wide reforms and strategies for the implementation of specific MDGs must fully incorporate gender perspectives and identify the resources required for ensuring gender-sensitive outcomes. This may involve targeted measures to address the specific needs of indigenous women.

To ensure that Goal 3 is met by 2015, the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality had recommended seven interdependent strategic priorities for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women: (a) Strengthening opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education; (b) Guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights; (c) Investing in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens; (d) Guaranteeing women's and girls' property and inheritance rights; (e) Eliminating gender inequality in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation; (f) Increasing women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies; and (g) Combating violence against women and girls. All these strategies are critical for the empowerment of all women, especially indigenous women.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples identified serious violations of the rights of indigenous women and girls

including physical abuse, rape and sexual harassment; extreme economic exploitation; denial of their civil rights; discrimination in the justice system; racism; and exclusion from public social services, especially in the areas of health, housing and education. The particularly sensitive situation of indigenous girls is of paramount importance in as much as they are often the most vulnerable victims of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. The Special Rapporteur has viewed with growing concern the often tragic situation of millions of indigenous women all over the world and he recommended that governments act in close and early consultation with indigenous women to formulate and adopt specific measures, projects and programmes to benefit such women and their families.

### **Distinguished delegates,**

Governments, NGOs and the international community have enhanced the situation of indigenous women and acted to protect their rights and freedoms. However, in the light of the many remaining obstacles and challenges, comprehensive measures must be implemented to address all forms of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion that keep indigenous women from a full enjoyment of their rights. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women continues to review the situation of indigenous women in the reporting of States parties in a systematic manner. During the 34<sup>th</sup> session, 16 January to 3 February 2006, the issue of indigenous women was raised by the Committee in the constructive dialogue with States parties that have indigenous peoples amongst their population and in their concluding comments.

All national development strategies for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, should integrate the perspectives, knowledge and contributions of indigenous women. Indigenous women are not fully participating in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development policies, and have very minimal participation in the MDG setting and implementation process, particularly at the national level. It is critical that indigenous women fully and effectively participate in all stages of the design, implementation and evaluation of development strategies and have effective access to decision-making processes. Cooperation and coordination with nongovernmental and indigenous women's organizations working to enhance the situation of indigenous women should be pursued as a matter of priority.

### **Distinguished delegates,**

There is increased recognition that indigenous women are a vital part of the women of the world and that they represent a wide variety of cultures and contexts with different needs and concerns. It is imperative that these different needs and concerns be taken into account in follow-up and monitoring of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

I thank you again for the opportunity to address the Forum and wish you a productive and successful session.