

**Statement by Mr. Luca Dall'Oglio, Permanent Observer of the
International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Fifth Session of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues**

New York, 16, May 2006

Dear distinguished members of the Permanent Forum, Member States, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, and special guests,

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is pleased to participate in this fifth session of the Permanent Forum. Listening to the statements at the opening ceremony of the fifth session yesterday, it was apparent that there exists a broad intersection of issues which affect both migrants and indigenous peoples – human rights, displacement, cultural identities and traditional ways of living, poverty, effective participation and inclusion into culturally sensitive legislation and policies. These issues are particularly meaningful for IOM because they are part of the nexus between indigenous peoples and migration, and they have not received sufficient attention by the international community.

At its third session in May 2004, the Permanent Forum recommended launching a new initiative, to include IOM and other stakeholders, to address issues relating to the large number of indigenous migrants within and beyond national borders and the particular vulnerability of indigenous women migrants, as well as the lack of adequate data and attention to their problems. As a response, IOM and the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum jointly organized an Expert Workshop on Indigenous Peoples and Migration. Therefore, we are pleased to introduce, with the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Report of the Expert Workshop on Indigenous Issues and Migration which was hosted by IOM at its headquarters in Geneva, on 6-7 April 2006. This report is available as a conference room paper for this fifth session.

Distinguished Members of the Forum,

This expert workshop marked the first expert-level meeting on the nexus between indigenous peoples and migration. The primary goal was to map out the area and to identify the key challenges and opportunities relating to the migration of indigenous peoples. The meeting brought together over 30 participants, including representatives and experts from several of the socio-cultural regions of the world including Africa, the Arctic and Europe, Asia, Central and South America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific as well as representatives from international agencies and observers from Member States.

This expert workshop was significant given that these two topics – indigenous peoples and migration – have not yet been consistently and systemically discussed within the same framework. We felt that this was the year and this was the initial opportunity to heighten attention on the social and political significance of indigenous peoples and migration. This fall, the General Assembly's 61st Session will host a High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development which is an opportunity not to be missed to inject indigenous issues and concerns within this debate at the highest level possible. Identifying the challenges and responses thereto, while also exploring avenues of cooperation amongst UN agencies, organizations and indigenous communities are necessary steps to be taken in fully exploring the nexus of indigenous peoples and migration.

Though the intent of this workshop was to provide a first-time forum on the issues on indigenous peoples and migration, the experts were able to provide a number of recommendations regarding state responsibility, information sharing, the role of international organizations and agencies, and specific recommendations for the upcoming High-Level Dialogue. The conference room paper available at this session further details these recommendations, but we would like to highlight the

recommendations made for the upcoming High-Level Dialogue along with recommendations for international organizations and UN agencies.

The experts emphasized that special focus should be given to indigenous peoples, by not only addressing the economic and social effects of indigenous migration, but also its cultural impact. Because many indigenous peoples have strong community bonds, their migration has a broader impact than on individual migrants alone. Indigenous migration therefore has a collective impact because such migration affects the entire community. For example, during the workshop some experts noted that for some indigenous peoples, their emigration from their community resulted in severing their community links. Additionally, migration of others onto indigenous territories can also result in the loss of traditional livelihoods and ways of living which impact the community as a whole.

But migration of indigenous peoples was also discussed as a potential positive element for the development and sustenance of indigenous communities which should be further explored. The emphasis on community values of indigenous peoples may place indigenous peoples at an advantage by adding value to the development process. The community organization of many indigenous peoples may help cultivate the impact of remittances and may also aid in the transfer of skills circulating throughout the entire community. When they do migrate out of their communities, indigenous peoples can promote their indigenous social and cultural capital in their destination countries or communities, at the same time furthering international attention to, and knowledge and interest in, indigenous peoples. Consider, for example, the presence and interaction of the many indigenous groups here with Member States, NGOs and international organizations during this two week session. Indigenous migrants may also encourage increased governmental consultation with indigenous communities on national laws and projects which may impact their lands. In essence, voluntary indigenous migrants may offer opportunities to their home communities that may not have otherwise occurred.

Finally, as a recommendation for the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the experts called for the effective implementation of international law at the national level for the protection of indigenous peoples. It was further emphasized that indigenous leaders and a diversity of actors participate in processes to have culturally sensitive laws extend to indigenous peoples.

For international organizations and UN agencies, further interagency cooperation and collaboration was recommended particularly to provide more data and resources for doing case studies on indigenous peoples and migration. Of particular significance, is the recommendation of creating a task force to specifically address migration issues of indigenous peoples within the existing Inter-Agency Support Group of the Permanent Forum. Such a task force could assist with studies being led by indigenous leaders or experts, and also promote capacity building projects dealing with the migration of indigenous peoples. Its focus could be to share information and ideas, improve understanding and make effective linkages between the work of all inter-agency members. Given the importance of migration, and its further complexity with respect to indigenous peoples, a proposed task force on migration within the current Inter-Agency Support Group of the Permanent Forum could provide much-needed expertise and resources to indigenous peoples.

Distinguished Members of the Forum,

As this workshop has proved, it is evident that the nexus between migration and indigenous people warrants further international attention. In advance of this year's High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, IOM stands ready to continue addressing this nexus.

Thank you.