

COUNCIL RESOLUTION OF 30 NOVEMBER 1998

Indigenous peoples within the framework of the development cooperation of the Community and the Member States

- "1. The Council recalls the conclusion of 5 June 1997 inviting the Commission to present a policy paper on cooperation with and support for indigenous peoples. The Council welcomes the Working Document of the Commission on support for indigenous peoples in the development cooperation of the Community and the Member States.

The Council also takes note of the international instruments addressing indigenous peoples, in particular the UN Resolution on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, the 1992 Rio Declaration, together with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the 1993 Vienna Declaration and the ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. These call for the International Community to ensure the economic, social and cultural well-being of indigenous peoples, their enjoyment of the fruits of sustainable development and their full and free participation in all aspects of society.

2. Indigenous cultures constitute a heritage of diverse knowledge and ideas, which is a potential resource to the entire planet. Consequently, the Council acknowledges the importance that indigenous peoples attach to the affirmation of their "self-development", that is to say, the shaping of their own social, economic and cultural development and their own cultural identities. This approach also recognises their own diverse concepts of development, and asserts that they should participate fully and freely in the development process. It is also important to take into account the various country contexts in which indigenous peoples live and to encourage the full participation of indigenous peoples in the democratic processes of their country. To overlook their participation may have unforeseen or even negative impacts on indigenous peoples.
3. The Council recognises that many indigenous peoples live in developing countries where they often experience economic, social and political marginalisation and are exposed to recurrent violations of human rights.
4. Furthermore, many indigenous peoples inhabit areas crucial for the conservation of biodiversity, and maintain social and cultural practices by way of which indigenous peoples have a special role in maintaining and enhancing biological diversity and in providing unique sustainable development models. The Council reiterates the political will of the EU and its Member States to participate actively in the initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity for supporting local and indigenous peoples in their contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.
5. The Council recognises that cooperation with and support for the establishment of partnerships with indigenous peoples is essential for the objectives of poverty elimination, sustainable development of natural resources, the observance of human rights and the development of democracy. The Council notes in particular:

- the key role played by indigenous peoples in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources;
 - the positive contribution of indigenous peoples in the development process;
 - the vulnerability of indigenous peoples, and the risk that development programmes may disadvantage them;
 - that indigenous peoples have the same rights as everybody else to a secure livelihood, and the lifestyle of their choice, and should be treated equally in the legal framework; they should also have access, on a non-discriminatory basis, to the opportunities and natural resources required to achieve these aspirations, as well as multilingual education and health services;
 - that indigenous peoples have the right to choose their own development paths, which includes the right to object to projects, in particular in their traditional areas. This includes compensation where projects negatively affect the livelihoods of indigenous peoples.
6. The Council acknowledges that the development cooperation should contribute to enhancing the right and capacity of indigenous peoples to their "self-development". This implies integrating the concern for indigenous peoples as a cross-cutting aspect at all levels of development cooperation, including policy dialogue with partner countries and enhancing the capacities of indigenous peoples' organisations to take an effective part in the planning and implementation of development programmes.
 7. A number of international development agencies and various EU Member States have already developed policies and strategies to improve the positive impact of development cooperation on indigenous peoples. The European Commission is cooperating with and supporting indigenous peoples through a wide range of policies, programmes and projects and has taken several initiatives in order to prepare a more comprehensive approach towards indigenous peoples.
 8. The Council also recognises the importance of coordination between the Community and the Member States to avoid duplication of efforts and to increase the effectiveness and adequacy of development support for indigenous peoples. This will require mechanisms for consultation, coordination and implementation.
 9. The Council recognises the need for a comprehensive policy, including gender aspects for working with indigenous peoples, and invites the Commission to develop further with Member States and in cooperation with indigenous peoples the comprehensive policy outlined in the Commission's Working Paper, with particular emphasis on practical ways to implement this policy. The primary focus should be on integrating the concern for indigenous peoples in existing procedures, guidelines and manuals for development cooperation. This will require further development of methodology in order to ensure indigenous peoples are able to offer an informed view on activities envisaged so that their full participation throughout the project cycle is ensured. Bearing in mind the extreme heterogeneity of the various indigenous peoples in different parts of the world, consideration should be given to the development of specific strategies for specific circumstances.

10. In this context the Commission and Member States should as soon as possible examine the means to produce specific practical procedures for its aid practitioners, illustrating key issues to be considered in order to ensure that the particular needs of indigenous peoples are fully taken into account throughout the project cycle, drawing on the tools used in the participatory approach to development and social impact assessments. The Council suggests that the measures proposed should be discussed with indigenous peoples and other partners who have interest in the integration of indigenous peoples into the development process, including local population, regional and local authorities, NGOs and other actors in civil society and the private sector. The expert group on social development should examine the feasibility of these measures, review the status of implementation of the action plan outlined in the working document on a regular basis and suggest, where appropriate, further action to implement the policy guidance on cooperation with and support of indigenous peoples.
11. The Commission is asked to report back to the Council with a review of progress in working with indigenous peoples in the second half of the year 2000."