

Statement of Mr. R.J. Lakra, WORLD ADIVASI COUNCIL (WAC) AT THE UN WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

Geneva, 21-25 July 2003, 21th session

Agenda Item No 6c): Review of activities undertaken under the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to make a few brief remarks which seem to be very important but are still left out while assessing the impact and result of the Decade. The comments may contribute to make a realistic and fruitful follow up program for the future. My remarks are not meant to undermine the achievements of the Decade which are expressed by the creation of the Permanent Forum, increased awareness and concern not only in the UN-organizations like WB, WHO, UNDP, UNICEF etc. but also in the western countries as well.

I am making the remarks keeping in mind the vast majority of the indigenous peoples of the third world and the so called developing countries.

- 1) It is nearly ten years ago that the World Bank and the World Watch Institute (Washington) have made assessments about the situation and number of indigenous people existing in the world. Therefore a similar study/investigation will be very useful to understand the developments during the last 10 years. Our observation reveals that the concern and fear expressed in the reports have become true. That the indigenous peoples are not only being marginalized but losing their native habitat, livelihood and also vanishing forever much more rapidly than ever.
- 2) Reasons for the serious negative developmental trend should be studied so that realistic action programs for their survival and development can be worked out. Without mentioning the results in advance, it can be said that most of the countries of the third world are moving out of track which is to be seen in population explosion and ecological destruction. The struggle for resources (land, forest and water) has long been started in which the minorities and weaker section of the people like indigenous are not only losing their identity or culture but very habitat and existence.
- 3) Therefore in regard to all implementations and activities to promote and protect (including worldwide family planning) must be under UN-(International) monitoring system. Many countries have very good constitutional provisions to protect and promote the minorities or weaker section of the society, but in reality everything is different. In fact, it may be a subject for study. Where has all the developmental assistance given during last 10 or 40 years gone? The lion share of the assistance have never reached to the people.

The development aid for the poor and minorities is the most vulnerable item for corruption and misuse. But at the same time least thoroughly monitored. The western developed countries know and have practiced the monitoring rules and procedures which need to be applied strictly also for the indigenous peoples.

I thank you Mr. Chairperson and my brothers and sisters for your kind attention.