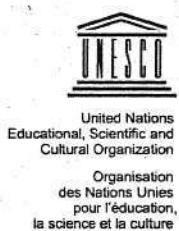


MONDAY 14 PM #015



### **Plenary Session “Dialogue with Agencies”**

### **6<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

**New York, 14 May 2007**

**Presented by**

Susanne Schnuttgen

Programme Specialist

UNESCO's Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue

**On behalf of**

Katérina Stenou, Director and UNESCO Focal Point for the Second Decade of  
the World's Indigenous People

Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to represent UNESCO at this sixth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, just two months after the “UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” entered into force, marking the achievement of Recommendation 14 of the Programme of Action for the Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People. The Convention is the first legal instrument that recognizes the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services as vehicles of identity, values and meaning. It acknowledges the value of indigenous cultures as a source of intangible and material wealth and of their positive contribution to sustainable development. However indigenous peoples’ cultural expressions are often weakened. This new Convention thus provides a framework and a tool to help ensure the right of indigenous peoples to create and disseminate in a fair environment their specific expressions, cultural goods and services.

The protection and promotion of cultural diversity and the fruitful dialogue among cultures is indeed a key mandate of UNESCO, which is of great relevance to the theme of this year’s session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on “Lands, territories and resources”. The issues raised under

this theme are not only of tremendous importance to the survival of indigenous peoples and cultures around the world, but also for the transmission of indigenous knowledge systems and the safeguarding of the intangible heritage of indigenous communities. The fact that culture and nature are inextricably linked in indigenous peoples' worldviews makes indigenous cultures precious in our joint efforts to protect and promote cultural and biological diversity.

For example, a sacred site is a concept that appears in the worldview of many indigenous peoples around the world and symbolizes this convergence of culture and nature. As concluded by participants of the international Tokyo symposium on "Conserving Cultural and Biological Diversity: The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes" organized by UNESCO in collaboration with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in Tokyo (Japan) in 2005<sup>1</sup>:

*"Sacred natural sites and associative cultural landscapes play a crucial role in conserving biological and protecting cultural diversity and indigenous/ local communities are the primary custodians for the safeguarding of diversity."*

**UNESCO would, therefore, like to recommend in this session that Permanent Forum Members encourage indigenous peoples' networks and**

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<sup>1</sup> Other partners in the organization of the symposium were the United Nations University (UNU), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), IUCN - The World Conservation Union, and the Japanese Government.]

**experts to provide UNESCO with information, knowledge and experiences related to the safeguarding of sacred sites and their role in protecting and promoting cultural and biological diversity on this planet.**

Indeed, as shown in more detail in the UNESCO contribution to the joint UN Paper on “lands, territories and resources”, our Organization implements a range of activities relating to this theme, covering different areas, [such as cultural and natural heritage conservation, fresh water, oceans, people and nature, earth sciences, coasts and small islands and the related issues of transmitting indigenous knowledge systems to future generations and linking them with scientific knowledge.]

UNESCO for example considers that **mapping of cultural resources** with indigenous communities can be an effective tool to explore in a participatory manner the spatial and territorial aspects of a community’s cultural resources, including their memory, imagination and other dimensions of their intangible heritage. In recent years, the Organization has been associated with more than 15 cultural mapping projects carried out with indigenous communities and has brought together leading experts and practitioners to identify ethical and methodological principles to orient future work in this area. The Havana Communiqué on Cultural Mapping summarizes these and UNESCO is working with IFAD and other UN Interagency Support Group to bring these principles into policies and action around

cultural mapping. A concept paper and a guide on organizing workshops to raise awareness about the opportunities and risks of cultural mapping will be available on UNESCO's website by the end of this year developed with the Indigenous Peoples for Africa Coordination Committee.

The UNESCO programme on Linking Indigenous and Local Knowledge Systems (LINKS) aims to empower local and indigenous peoples in natural resource governance by advocating full recognition of their unique knowledge, know how and practices. The Programme in fact launched a publication on "Water and Indigenous Peoples" at the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico in 2006 and just published "Fishers' Knowledge in Fisheries Science and Management" as well as the Maori version of the interactive CD-ROM "The Canoe is the People: Indigenous Navigations in the Pacific".

Dear participants,

Many of the properties inscribed on UNESCO's **World Heritage List** are of particular importance to indigenous peoples who may claim rights and interests over the land, water and/or sky of those properties. The Operational Guidelines of the Convention now provide opportunities for the recognition of places of particular importance to indigenous peoples as outstanding cultural landscapes and encourage States Parties to ensure the participation of a wide variety of

stakeholders in the identification, nomination and protection of World Heritage Properties.

In this context, I am pleased to share with you that for 2006/2007, an indigenous person, Mr Tumu Te Heuheu, a Maori from New Zealand, for the first time chairs the World Heritage Committee. Mr Te Heuheu emphasizes a community approach to World Heritage conservation and at its next session in June 2007, the World Heritage Committee will review a proposal to add “community” to the four strategic objectives or the so-called four C’s (Credibility, Conservation, Capacity Building and Communication) of the Budapest Declaration on World Heritage.

I am, furthermore, pleased to inform you that UNESCO has been asked to carry out a preliminary study to assess the technical and legal aspects regarding the protection of indigenous and endangered languages. The Venezuelan Delegation brought up this issue during the last UNESCO Executive Board, underlining that throughout the world, indigenous languages have been adversely affected by displacement and globalization and many have died out. Today, 3000 indigenous languages are considered endangered. A number of UNESCO standard-setting instruments are relevant in protecting indigenous languages: the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace and of course the

UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. From an education perspective the UNESCO guidelines on education and languages are furthermore relevant in this context, since they emphasize the importance of mother tongue, bilingual and intercultural education.

**UNESCO would like to encourage the Permanent Forum and indigenous organizations and experts working on language, to share with our Organization relevant case studies and experiences on the issue of endangered and indigenous languages, including information on strategies and measures that have been undertaken to safeguard and promote them.**

Dear participants,

I am pleased to report to you that an intersectoral team in UNESCO is monitoring the progress we are making in answering to the different recommendations addressed to UNESCO in the Programme of Action for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. In line with Recommendation 96 of the Programme of Action for the Second Decade, we established a network of UNESCO focal points on indigenous issues in our field offices to strengthen partnerships with indigenous peoples at local levels and reinforce interaction across regions. In this regard it is worth mentioning that UNESCO actively participates in the UN Task Force on integrating indigenous

**issues in the work of UN country teams** facilitated by the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum.

UNESCO has furthermore continued to host indigenous fellows under the Anglophone and Francophone UN Indigenous Fellowship Programmes and is this year also going to participate for the first time in the Russian-speaking programme.

UNESCO participated in the **annual meeting of the Interagency Support Group on Indigenous Issues held in Rome/Tivoli** in September 2006 and co-chaired the session on indigenous culture and development. The theme of the meeting, “Development with Identity”, reflects key principles that orient UNESCO work, notably that cultural diversity and community participation is crucial to sustainable development. As one follow up to the meeting, UNESCO and the Chairman of the Permanent Forum, Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz are discussing the elaboration of a concept paper on development with identity from the perspective of indigenous peoples, exploring the principles reflected in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Indeed, Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz’ participation in a conceptual workshop organized by UNESCO in the context of elaborating the World Report on Cultural Diversity was highly appreciated.

In light of UNESCO's concern to strengthen intercultural dialogue with and among indigenous peoples, UNESCO participated in the **First International Congress of the “Coordination Autochtone Francophone”** held in Agadir which aimed at reinforcing networking and information sharing with Francophone indigenous peoples. UNESCO is now supporting the “Groupe international de travail pour les peuples autochtones” (GITPA) to document knowledge and experience of Francophone indigenous peoples in a multimedia tool entitled “Francophone Indigenous Peoples on the Move”.

On a final note, we would like to thank the Forum for the excellent collaboration we have had over the last year and wish you a successful sixth session.

Thank you for your attention.