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**UN-HABITAT**



## **United Nations Human Settlements Programme**

Programme des Nations Unies pour les établissements humains - Programa de las Naciones Unidas para los Asentamientos Humanos

P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi, KENYA. Telephone: (+254-2) 7625013 Fax: (+254-2) 762 4265  
Email: [Housing.Policy@unhabitat.org](mailto:Housing.Policy@unhabitat.org) Website: <http://www.unhabitat.org>

### **STATEMENT TO THE 7<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES.**

**THEMATIC FOCUS ON CLIMATE CHANGE, 21 April 2008, New York**

Madam Chairperson, distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon. As many of you may know, Mr. Selman Erguden, the former UN-HABITAT focal point on indigenous issues retired last July. UN-HABITAT's Shelter Branch and particularly its Housing Policy Section are continuing the important work initiated under the leadership of Mr. Erguden, and hope to also continue in the same good spirit of collaboration with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Urbanization is occurring at an ever increasing pace, and in the near future over half of the world's total population will be urban. Cities in general, are the engines of economic, social and cultural development, but they can also generate and intensify social exclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples. Although the majority of the world's indigenous peoples currently live in rural areas, there is a rapid urbanization process occurring, fuelled by many factors, including land dispossession, displacement, conflict, as well as natural disasters and increasingly, climate change effects on ancestral lands and traditional livelihoods.

UN-HABITAT works towards the goal of "Adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development", while focusing on the needs of the poor and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including indigenous peoples. The Habitat Agenda, Millennium Development Goals and other relevant international instruments and frameworks related to spatial, economic and social development, as well as human rights, provide guidance to UN-HABITAT's work.

In response to the outcome and recommendations from the Fourth and Fifth Permanent Forum Sessions, UN-HABITAT, in cooperation with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum, the International Organization for Migration and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, organized an international Expert Group Meeting on Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration in Santiago de Chile in March 2007. The report of this Expert Group Meeting was submitted to the Sixth Session of the Permanent Forum. It contains recommendations to UN agencies and stakeholders. One of these recommendations calls on UN-HABITAT and the co-organizing agencies of the Expert Group Meeting to facilitate the elaboration of policy guidelines for governments and local authorities to assist in the development of public policies related to the challenges faced by indigenous peoples in cities. UN-HABITAT, under the umbrella of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, has begun implementation of this recommendation. The first in a series of policy guides will be on urban indigenous peoples' housing. This guide is expected to contribute to the more

effective realization of indigenous peoples' housing rights and secure tenure in the urban setting, thus complementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues. Facilitated by the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, a consultation on the implementation of this recommendation will be held during this Permanent Forum session, and will take into account the Permanent Forum's thematic focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The outcomes of this consultation will be presented to the Forum under Agenda item 8) under 'On-going priorities and themes', on Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration during the morning session on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, and we hope to see many of you there.

UN-HABITAT has several policy instruments and programme activities that are relevant to indigenous peoples and climate change challenges and mitigation. UN-HABITAT's new Global Campaign for Sustainable Urbanization and the advocacy work of the recently established Sustainable Urban Development Network (SUD-Net) focus on urban governance, decentralization and environmental issues, looking at how climate change impacts human settlements and how to adapt cities and local governments, with the participation of civil society, to be more responsive to climate challenges. Particular concerns here are the impacts of climate change on livelihoods, affecting for example agriculture and rearing of livestock; as well as having physical effects on buildings and infrastructure in affected areas, due to increased flooding, the disappearance of permafrost etc. The resolution from the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT, on "Sustainable development of Arctic human settlements" particularly mandates UN-HABITAT to work on climate change challenges faced by indigenous peoples in that region. Articles 21 and 23 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are of particular importance to UN-HABITAT's work and mandate as regards housing-related issues. Adequate housing for all requires planning for equal access to land and basic services, which can only be delivered through inclusive participatory urban governance that respects the right of indigenous peoples to fully participate in all relevant decision-making processes. UN-HABITAT, through its work as focal point in the UN system for working with local authorities, promotes the principles of inclusiveness and equity in urban governance and participatory planning for sustainable human settlements development.

Several of UN-HABITAT's ongoing activities contribute to the five main objectives of the Second International Decade of the World's indigenous peoples. These activities include the economic and social empowerment of indigenous peoples, urban economic development and finance, rural-urban linkages, promoting civic engagement, social integration, participatory urban planning and management, and gender mainstreaming. We are also engaged, with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in the development of a global monitoring mechanism for progress on the realization of the right to adequate housing based on a set of housing rights indicators. Indigenous peoples' issues will feature prominently in the up-coming World Urban Forum, which will take place from 2 to 7 November this year, in Nanjing, China. UN-HABITAT thanks the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum for organizing this important event and look forward to engaging further on the crucial issue of the role of indigenous peoples in the process of mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

We look forward to your participation in the Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum. Thank you.