

20080421/016/UNU/Item 3/PM

**Statement to the UN Permanent Forum
Seventh Session
United Nations University – Institute of Advanced Studies**

21 April 2006

Madame Chairperson,

The United Nations University (UNU) mandate is to provide research and training on emerging issues for the UN system. We aim to provide policy relevant information and analysis in a neutral and impartial manner. UNU is an official part of the UN. Uniquely, within the UN system UNU enjoys academic autonomy. As the only official part of the UN with academic independence, we provide a unique bridge between the academic community and the UN. The Headquarters of UNU is based in Japan. UNU has centres in fourteen different countries around the world.

An important area for UNU is the challenges that indigenous peoples face in the modern world.

A focus for our work in this area is the establishment of a UNU research centre on traditional knowledge.

Key aims of the UNU TK Centre would be to: support and promote indigenous leadership at the international level, change minds about the importance of Traditional Knowledge, and provide a focal point for promoting research and training on issues regarding the retention, maintenance and promotion of TK.

To demonstrate the type of contribution a UNU centre could make on this topic we have initiated a number of pilot activities. These pilot activities are looking various issues within the topics of climate change, water management and raising awareness about international activities amongst indigenous people. Details about our activities can be found at www.unutki.org.

For this meeting of the Forum a key pilot activity of UNU was the International Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change, held in Darwin, Australia in April mentioned by you Madame chairperson. The meeting addressed the effects of climate change on indigenous peoples, mitigations and adaptation measures, carbon markets and factors effecting indigenous participation in the climate change processes. The report of this meeting is before you in document CRP[. 52 experts from around the world participated in this meeting and adopted 17 recommendations.

First and foremost among the recommendations was that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples be used as the overarching framework for climate change policies that affect indigenous peoples.

The experts also rejected the view that indigenous people are passive victims of climate change, but are key actors and can provide many of the solutions and in many areas lead the way.

The experts called for the full and effective participation of indigenous people in: the development of policies and other strategies to address mitigation and adaptation measures, in particular the processes leading up to the 15th meeting of the UNFCCC COP in 2009; and research and information about climate change particular the social and economic impacts of climate change.

Promoting indigenous assessments of the impacts of climate change and the responses that are developed was seen as a crucial task for this Forum and for those of us involved in supporting the Forum's work on climate change. UNU is committed providing support to these endeavours and has a number of activities underway that aim to do this. For example, UNU is playing an important role in the follow-up to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and within this process will be working to ensure that there are indigenous assessments of these issues.

As many of you know we began the initiative to establish a UNU centre in 2004. This process has undertaken an extensive and wide range consultation, including raising this matter at the fifth session of the Forum. These consultations revealed wide-spread support for the establishment of a UNU centre on TK.

As a result of these consultations UNU decided to explore the feasibility of establishing a decentralized Institute that would be hosted at the Charles Darwin University, in Darwin, Australia. We are also exploring the possibility of additional nodes for this centre in several neighboring developing countries.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the support and interest from all those who have contributed to our work on this so far. I would particularly like to thank the Christensen Fund as well as the people and Government of the Northern Territory in Australia for their intellectual and financial support.

An important outstanding issue is the political and legal support of the Federal Government of Australia. The next meeting of the UNU Council is in December 2008. Political and legal support from the Australian Government is needed before then if this initiative is to be assured of success.

Any support that this Forum and its participants could provide to persuade the Federal Government of Australia to support this initiative would be welcome and timely.

Madame Chairperson, we wish you every success for this meeting of the Forum and promise to do all we can to implement the recommendations coming out the meeting.

Thank you.