

STATEMENT BY YOZO YOKOTA



On 24 July 2002  
At the 20th Session of the Working Group  
on Indigenous Populations

Under Item 4 (b): Right to Development

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson, for giving me the floor. I am aware of the time constraint. Thus, my intervention will be very brief.

Mr. Chairperson, I should like to make some contribution to the important topic of the right to development of indigenous peoples.

First, when we discuss the issue of the right to development of indigenous peoples, we have to look at all aspects of individual and collective right to development of indigenous peoples. Not only economic development, which is of course an important element of indigenous right to development, but also civil, political, social, cultural, ritual, religious and all other aspects of human development are essential for indigenous peoples.

Second, up until now, we do not have comprehensive data for indigenous peoples with regard to the right to development of indigenous peoples. As you know, most useful data of human development in general are provided annually by the UNDP's Human Development Report. But, the information included therein is given only on country-by-country basis. What we need to know when we address the issue of indigenous right to development is information about per capita income, literacy rate, life expectancy, and all other relevant basic information of the respective indigenous peoples, particularly in comparison with such data of other populations in each country. Efforts should be made to collect such indigenous focused human development indicators so that we may be able to assess more accurately the actual situation of the enjoyment of the right to development by indigenous peoples.

Third, and this is my last point, in addressing the

right to development with respect to indigenous peoples, we should not confuse with development projects financed by the World Bank, regional development banks and bilateral aid agencies. These projects have been, and still are, planned, negotiated and executed as national development projects which are often not beneficial to the indigenous peoples concerned. As we have been hearing testimony in this conference hall in the last few days, some, if not many, of them are even detrimental to the life and health of indigenous peoples in the project areas. In this connection, I propose the following as essential for making national development projects in harmony with the enjoyment of the right to development by the indigenous peoples:

1. All national development projects affecting the life, health and environment as well as the right to land and natural resources of the indigenous peoples concerned should be planned and implemented in full participation of and with close consultation with such indigenous peoples. All the appraisal reports for such national development projects should have a section describing the process of such participation and consultation as well as the possible consequences or impact on the life, health and environment of the indigenous peoples.

2. Efforts should be made by governments as well as indigenous organizations to formulate good development projects for the indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have the right, as a part of their right to development, to plan and execute their own development projects with financial and technical assistance from the governments as well as international financial or technical assistance institutions such as the World Bank and UNDP. Such projects would include general improvement of infrastructures of the indigenous communities, establishment and operation of indigenous schools, hospitals and training centers, and research institutions for the study and education of indigenous language, history, culture and religion.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this floor.