

UNITED NATIONS  
Working Group of Indigenous Populations  
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

For the opportunity to contribute a short message from the Center of Sustainable Development in Germany to the Decade of Indigenous People.

Dear brothers and sisters, my name is Peter Schmuck. I am a psychologist in that part of the world, where 20% of the world population are consuming 75% of its resources. I think that this overconsumption is one of the main reasons for what we speak about at this conference: the impairment of the atmosphere, the destruction of the biosphere and especially the genocide of the ethnosphere.

BUT: Are the people in these countries happier today than 50 years ago? Not, in contrary. Despite the economic growth and the ever growing average consumption level in these so called "developed" countries the percentage of happy people does not grow since many decades, and even worse, the number of several individual pathologies is increasing.

Thus, we people in the "developed" countries have to admit, that our way of life has pathogene aspects and should not serve longer as a model for other people. What I feel we lack most are

- the spiritual connectedness with all living beings on the world
- the bond connecting us with the past and the future
- the capability for emotional empathy
- a fulfilling sense of life

And exactly these are the strengths of you, of the indigenous people of our world. So, many people in industrial countries more and more appreciate and need your traditional wisdom and attitudes to mother earth, which we have forgotten. The decade of Indigenous People may serve to accelerate the appropriate transfer.

Mr. Chairman,

What happens actually in our world is a "slow suicide" of the human family. If we want to escape this process, we need the experiences of all of the families' members. The contribution of indigenous people can be to teach us in the "developed countries", (which I see in reality as the emotional and spiritual slums of our world), what we have to relearn. Let us use the International Decade of the Worlds Indigenous People to intensify that process. A growing number of people in the Northern hemisphere is sensitised for what happens and is willing to learn from you. Thank you for your attention.

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