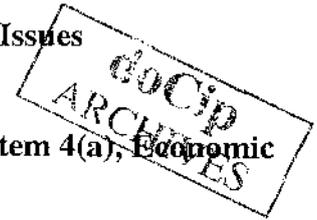




**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Third Session, May 2004**



Statement of the International Labour Organization under Agenda Item 4(a), Economic and Social Development

Economic and social development is a key issue for indigenous and tribal peoples. The majority of these peoples worldwide are marginalized in almost every aspect of daily life. With globalization, increasing population pressure on their traditional lands, and the increasing utilization of their traditional resource base for national economic interests, they are faced with increasing poverty, ill health, and discrimination.

Globalization is posing increasing challenges for indigenous and tribal peoples. The ILO's World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization was established in part in recognition that the failure of earlier decades of economic reform and adjustment shows that the ability to respond to the opportunities created by globalization depends on a more integrated view of interdependent economic and social objectives. This calls for an integrated approach to the economic, social, and political dimensions of public policy. The World Commission report referred specifically to indigenous peoples being affected particularly harshly by globalization.

As poverty reduction is an integral part of the development process, the ILO has been providing support to the development of several Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in various regions of the world. The social and economic development agenda, particularly in respect of indigenous and tribal peoples, must be rights-based and integrated. Continued unemployment, inequality, social exclusion, poverty and inadequate opportunities for work in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity, show that more integrated policies are needed if globalization is to work for all. There are great discrepancies in the formulation of PRSPs from country to country, and only a few take into account the specific needs of indigenous and tribal peoples – it is clear that this must be corrected. National poverty reduction and development strategies rarely, if at all, reflect the needs of indigenous and tribal peoples as a specific group.

A key element in the improvement of the economic and social policy framework for indigenous and tribal peoples must begin with data collection. However, there are still no reliable official economic, social and other statistics in many countries that are disaggregated according to ethnic group, making it difficult to identify how social or ethnic groups fare compared to others.

It is vital to develop an approach to economic and social development that respects indigenous and tribal peoples' cultures and traditions. Even today, with the growing international consciousness of the need to address these peoples in a culturally appropriate way, many development models (in particular so-called replicable models), and development policies and projects still do not sufficiently take into account their specific needs and world-views. The imposition of alien structures on indigenous communities is most often detrimental to their cultures. Alternative development models, based on the needs of these peoples, as expressed by them, and implemented in consultation with them are more effective and sustainable.

Experience in the supervision of Convention No. 169 and in the implementation of ILO technical co-operation projects addressing indigenous peoples, has also demonstrated that effective consultations with indigenous and tribal peoples are key to the effective functioning of any plans, programmes, policies or legislation that concerns them. This is a key question for the Forum to address. Within the context of the supervision of Convention No. 169, it is worth noting that two inter-related themes have arisen repeatedly, both within the context of the regular reporting on the implementation of the Convention to the ILO's Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, as well as regards a number of complaints brought against States under article 24 of the ILO Constitution in recent years. These have been the duty of States to consult with indigenous and tribal peoples when consideration is being given to legislative or administrative measures that affect them, and the same duty of consultation prior to the exploration or exploitation of natural resources on the lands they occupy or use.

These are key issues that must be addressed within the framework of economic and social development.

The ILO proposes, with the Inter-Agency Support Group, that the overarching theme of indigenous peoples and poverty be considered as a theme to be deliberated at a future session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. This theme would bring together, *inter alia*, questions of social and economic development, globalization, income generation, labour and employment issues, migration, discrimination, poverty reduction and human rights. These questions are of course not mutually exclusive. The ILO considers it of utmost importance that an holistic approach to such questions needs to be developed, that systematically ensures the integration of indigenous and tribal peoples' own visions for development, and respects their cultures, ways of life and human rights.