

Twelfth Session of the Permanent Forum
20 - 31 May 2013

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Respected Elders and Indigenous Peoples Leaders
Delegates from Member states and UN organizations,
Civil Society Representatives

Ladies and Gentlemen,

FAO would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the newly nominated members of the Permanent Forum and its elected Chair Mr Paul Kanyinke Sena

Mr Chair/Madame Chair

Let me begin by conveying to you what an honor it is to have the opportunity to address, on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization, this important Forum in which indigenous-nominated representatives discuss equally with governments, speaking for themselves as full-fledged members of a United Nations body.

As mentioned by our Director-General on several occasions, FAO considers indigenous and tribal peoples with their wealth of ancestral knowledge, key partners in the fight against hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.

Available data on indigenous peoples' nutrition suggest that development efforts, to date, do not always reduce the marginalization, poverty and food insecurity of indigenous peoples.

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To address this, in 2010 FAO launched its Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, committing to include and promote indigenous peoples issues in relevant food security work.

But what has happened since then?

Since the beginning of 2012, FAO has been undergoing an important re-structuring process, changing its institutional setup and reducing its Strategic Objectives from 11 to 5.

These 5 new objectives are broad in nature, and thought with collaborative models in mind. FAO cannot achieve these objectives alone. If we are to end hunger, now more than ever, partnerships with key allies are necessary.

In April this year, after an extensive consultation process, member states adopted FAO's new Corporate Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations. This renewed Strategy reflects the need for partnerships and multi-stakeholder approaches in all areas of FAO's work, and at all levels.

The Strategy not only identifies indigenous peoples as vulnerable and marginalized communities needing support, but it also recognizes the unique contribution of their agri-food systems and the traditional knowledge that supports them, making explicit reference to FAO's Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

Particular focus is put on strengthening FAO's work at decentralized level through its Country Programming Frameworks. It is in these frameworks where national priorities in food security are identified.

FAO will intensify its efforts to make sure that indigenous peoples' organizations, along with other stakeholders, will be meaningfully involved in the Country Programming Frameworks.

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The approval in May 2012 of the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the context of National Food Security* - the result of a thorough negotiation process in which representatives of Indigenous Peoples participated actively - , is also a good sign of the efforts undertaken to protect indigenous peoples' rights and customary tenure systems.

These Voluntary Guidelines do not only recognize the economic and environmental value, but also the social, cultural and spiritual value that land, fisheries and forests have for indigenous peoples.

FAO is moving towards more inclusive models of policy making. In this regard, FAO pays special attention to the right of indigenous peoples and communities to decide the kind of development that takes place on their ancestral lands and territories.

Development that should be according to their own priorities and definitions of well-being, and with a due respect for their right to free, prior, and informed consent.

FAO has an active Inter-Departmental Working Group on indigenous peoples involved in different initiatives. Let me mention few of them:

- a. An agreement with Universidad Indígena Intercultural to provide internship opportunities in FAO to students interested in food security.
- b. Preparation of capacity development materials and Regional meetings on the Voluntary Guidelines on Tenure.
- c. The publication of a study on indigenous fire knowledge and practices in Tanzania.

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FAO also coordinates the UN Inter Agency Regional Supporting Group for indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean where, two regional Dialogues have taken place recently, leading to a common agenda and establishing a shared Mechanism for its follow up.

Mr. Chairman/Madame Chair,

We would like to take this opportunity to kindly ask you, members of the Permanent Forum, to help FAO in its work with Indigenous Peoples communities and Organizations. We would like to ask your advice in identifying key partners at regional and national level.

We kindly ask you to assist us in identifying experts who could work along FAO's technical experts in different areas related to food and nutrition security and natural resource management.

In addition, we would welcome your support in this International Year of Quinoa and in the activities planned for the 2014: International Year of Family Farming, particularly with regard to the linkages with the Voluntary Guidelines on Tenure of Lands, Fisheries and Forests.

We look forward to working closer and better with all of you to promote new, inclusive and pluralistic ways of food production, distribution and consumption, in which indigenous peoples and their invaluable knowledge must be at the frontline.

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You are the bearers of traditional knowledge rooted in a respectful management of natural resources.

Only with the active collaboration of indigenous peoples we can achieve food production systems capable of ensuring the sustainable future of our mother earth, its Beings and the many peoples and cultures to which it is home.

Thank you very much for your attention