

Shimin Gaikou Centre

Citizen's Diplomatic Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

3-35-13-204 Higashi-Komatsugawa, Edogawa-ku, Tokyo 132-0033, JAPAN

Tel: 03-5662-0906, Fax: 03-3-5662-0906, shimingaikou@hotmail.com

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

1st Session, May 13-24, 2002

United Nations Headquarter, New York

Agenda Item #5-General Statements

Mr. Chairperson, Members of the Permanent Forum, Indigenous representatives and government delegates: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate everybody who made this Forum a reality.

On behalf of the Shimin Gaikou Centre (SGC), an organization comprised of indigenous and non-indigenous members. I would like to make a brief comment and recommendations in regard to the existing statistical data used by the International organizations especially to UNDP's Human Development Index.

Mr. Chairperson, it has been more than 20 years since indigenous peoples' voices to demand justice and protection of their rights have been echoed through all the WGIP sessions. Whenever they are from, these indigenous peoples' claims have had one persistant point: that they have long been discriminated and are still victims of discrimination. And now, it has become ever more clear that this discrimination is entangled in various areas such as environment, health, education and employment. Only about 20 years later since the first session of the WGIP, member-states recognized this fact at ever-highest level in Durban Declaration last year. As Mary Robinson also points out in her statement earlier, it was a welcomed corner stone, however, there are still a lot to be done.

Drawing from these perspectives, many of the members and interveners have pointed out that, in order to clearly reveal and document this shocking fact and enable us to evaluate the UN system in terms of its benefit to indigenous peoples, there is an acute need of statistical data which specifically highlights the vulnerability of indigenous peoples. However, all UN agencies currently do not have this kind of sufficient data.

In this regard, I would like to make recommendations about the concept of UNDP's Human Development and Human Development Index (HDI). UNDP's Human Development Index is claimed to be as one of the most comprehensive ways to measure well-being of people from various angles, and one of the most influential measures for policy-makers to identify the top priority areas. As UNDP claims, its shift from a sole concern with economic growth to concern for equity, sustainability and empowerment is a welcomed beginning. And also UNDP's Human Development Report 2000 which covered the relationship between social and economic development and human rights ever in depth could be the starting point to enhance and protect indigenous peoples' rights. However, Mr. Chairperson, looking from indigenous peoples' perspectives, there

are some major problems with this concept of Human Development and Human Development Index. (1)First, the Human Development Index is merely based upon national averages. Mr. Chairperson, given the fact that indigenous peoples are suffering from marginalization and discrimination, this national average approach fails to reveal, and in fact is often used to disguise the severe conditions in which indigenous peoples live. Second, (2) for most of indigenous peoples, the concept of well-being is holistic, so that in consultation with indigenous peoples, the human development concept needs to incorporate their perspectives.

Therefore, I propose the following:

1. UNDP has to take account of indigenous peoples' holistic concept of the social and economic development especially in its concept of Human Development.
2. Instead of simply relying on national averages, Human Development Index and UNDP's Human Development Reports should provide the necessary statistical data specifically covering indigenous people: such as life expectancy, infant mortality, unemployment rate, the extent to which indigenous peoples have access to political and legal institutions, public expenditure used for indigenous peoples' communities, the number of seats at parliament or any other legislative institutions held by indigenous peoples.□
3. UNDP should devote its next Human Development Report entirely on indigenous peoples.
4. UN agencies, World Bank and any other related organizations should always refer to such data that specifically covers indigenous peoples in order to identify top priority areas.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson