



December 2011

End of Year Message:

**By Ms. Myrna Cunningham, Chair, UN
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

**UN Training in Democratic Republic of
Congo**

Indigenous Women's Meeting in Mexico

UN Training in Manila, Philippines

**Expert Group Meeting: Combating
Violence against Indigenous Women and
Girls: Art 22 UNDRIP**

**Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on
Indigenous Issues**

The Message Stick ¹ highlights the activities undertaken by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and its Secretariat. It is produced by SPFII staff.

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2011 has been a year of great progress and many challenges for indigenous peoples. Despite their wealth of knowledge and wisdom, many indigenous communities still live in situations of poverty and discrimination. They make up one-third of the world's one billion extreme poor in rural

¹ A Message Stick is a traditional Australian Aboriginal method of correspondence whereby runners would deliver messages carved in symbols on a piece of wood to inform other indigenous peoples of upcoming events.

areas, and are among the most vulnerable and marginalized of any group.

However, progress to change this reality is underway. This year UNESCO launched a policy to engage with indigenous peoples.

The initiative guides UNESCO's future programming so that it does not just avoid harm to indigenous peoples, but rather actively promote indigenous peoples' rights. Similarly, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) established an indigenous peoples' forum, with the overall aim to advance the participation of indigenous peoples in IFAD discussions and programmes. Renewed commitment towards Women in indigenous communities is also underway. UN Women has agreed to support the voices of indigenous women, and their economic empowerment, along with their political leadership. They currently support the leadership and engagement of indigenous women, including in international forums such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Rio+20 Conference in 2012.

Nevertheless, there are still remaining challenges that should be addressed in the future. We should focus on strengthening the coherence and enhancing the linkages between the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable development and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and of other relevant internationally agreed goals in the context of major UN



conferences, in particular Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

My hope is that the international community and indigenous peoples continue to work in common cause to consolidate gains, strengthen institutions, promote good governance and help fight repression wherever it holds way. I ask the UN and indigenous peoples organizations to continue working to ensure the full, formal and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in all processes and activities of the Rio+20 Conference, and its preparatory and follow-up mechanisms, in accordance with the UNDRIP and the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

We should not forget that indigenous peoples continue to inhabit and maintain the last remaining sustainable ecosystems and biodiversity hotspots in the world. Being the reason why it is important that Indigenous peoples organizations and the international community to work together in order to protect, respect and fulfill indigenous peoples rights.

UN Training in Democratic Republic of Congo



UN Permanent Forum member, Mr. Simon M'Viboudoulou (Center) at the workshop in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Photo Credit: Nilla Bernardi

The Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (SPFII) in cooperation

with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) country office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country office, International Labour Organization (ILO) Geneva and Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Geneva, organized a workshop, from 21st – 25th November, in Brazzaville in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is part of the ongoing efforts to facilitate the integration of indigenous peoples' issues into country laws, policies and programmes.

UN Permanent Forum member, Mr. Simon William M'Viboudoulou was also present at the workshop and gave a presentation on the work of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The workshop was attended by government officials and some parliamentarians who are directly involved in the implementation of Law No. 5-2011 of 25 February 2011 and the National Action Plan, which promotes and protects the rights of indigenous peoples; UN Country Team (UNCT) and indigenous representatives from the various provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, including the National Network of Indigenous Peoples (RENAPAC).

The aim of workshop was to facilitate the integration of Human rights based training, for mainstreaming indigenous peoples' issues in the work of the UNCT, especially with reference to the elaboration of the Common Country Assessment and for the review of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework at country level. The dialogue among UN agencies (UNFPA, UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF and OHCHR regional office in Cameroun), government officials and indigenous peoples contributed to identifying challenges in the implementation of the Law on indigenous peoples and elaborated on possible strategies for achieving the full and effective participation

of indigenous peoples as well as their free, prior and informed consent in any decision-making processes.

Indigenous Women's Meeting in Mexico

Ms Myrna Cunningham, the Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and staff from the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues participated at meeting of indigenous women, held in Chiapas, Mexico from 1 – 4th December.

The meeting titled: “Articuladas avanzamos hacia el ejercicio pleno de nuestros derechos” was jointly organized by Comisión Nacional de desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígena (CDI-México), UN Women, UNDP México, Alianza de Mujeres Indígenas de Centroamérica y México, Centro de Investigaciones y estudios superiores en antropología social (CIESAS), Cátedra Indígena Itinerante de la Universidad Indígena Intercultural, Fondo Indígena. Around 70 women from Latin and Central America attended the meeting..

The objective of the meeting was to strengthen the experience of indigenous women by reflecting on the content and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to discuss best practices and lessons learned. The meeting was beneficial in providing indigenous women's with the tools to advance their rights and effective participation in the local, regional and international processes of policy and decision making that have on impact on their lives.

UN Training in Manila, Philippines

With the support of the Technical Cooperation Unit of DESA, the United Nations Country Team in the Philippines and a national consultant, two members of the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues participated in a training

for indigenous people's organizations and government officials from 7 to 9 December 2011 in Manila, Philippines.

The training was attended by 28 indigenous people's representatives and 25 government officials. The sessions included the 3 UN mechanisms on indigenous peoples, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the implementation of the Declaration. The United Nations Human Rights Based Approach as well as the 169 ILO Convention and national legislation on Indigenous Peoples was also covered in the presentations.

Expert Group Meeting: Combating Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls: Art 22 UNDRIP

The Expert Group Meeting on the theme: “Combating violence against indigenous women and girls: article 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” from January 18 – 20th, at the UN Headquarters in New York.

This meeting is being organized following a recommendation of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), approved by ECOSOC decision 2011/266. The report of the meeting will go to the Permanent Forum's eleventh session in May 2012, and it will also be forwarded to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-sixth session in 2012. The meeting will discuss the way in which the UNPFII should address its mandate under Article 22 of the Declaration which is to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.

Invited regional experts, members of UNPFII, UN agencies and representatives of



indigenous peoples' organizations will be presenting on relevant topics over the three day meeting.

**Secretariat of the Permanent
Forum on Indigenous Issues**

The Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the General Assembly in 2002. It is based at UN Headquarters in New York in the Division for Social Policy and Development of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DSPD/DESA).

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