

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples – 9 August 2012

“Indigenous Media, Empowering Indigenous Voices”

The event:

This interactive dialogue marks the commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. As part of this commemoration, the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is organizing an interactive dialogue discussion which will focus on “*Indigenous Media, Empowering Indigenous Voices*”. The observance of the day will take place on Thursday 9 August in ECOSOC Chamber, from 2:30 to 6:00 pm.

Audience:

- 1) UN agencies, funds and programmes
- 2) States
- 3) Indigenous peoples from the area
- 4) NGO Community
- 5) General public

Background Information:

Indigenous peoples from around the globe have been keen to develop their own media systems in order to reverse the negative media stereotypes of indigenous peoples. Indigenous media-making reflects new paradigms of indigenous self-representation across many media forms, including feature film, documentary, animation, video art, television and radio, the Internet, digital archiving and journalism. Indigenous peoples use the media to combat discrimination, advocate for resources and rights, and preserve their cultures, languages, spirituality traditions. By representing themselves in a variety of media, indigenous peoples are also challenging misleading mainstream and official state narratives, forging international solidarity movements, and bringing human rights violations to international attention. They are also using communication and technology tools to support their innovations and livelihoods, and gain access to economic opportunities, on their own terms and according to their cultures and values.

Communication and media can support and promote the concept of intercultural education. Media can give a glimpse at the reality and trigger a two-way communication, in which information is directed from the global level to indigenous communities and from indigenous communities to the external world. Indigenous media can convey information from public institutions at state or national level, to other regional and local levels by using indigenous forms of communication. At the same time, indigenous media can be used as instruments to influence the social and political agenda-setting by portraying the reality of indigenous peoples' situation. This in turn can lead to raising awareness on the rights enshrined in international instruments, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and on the need to implement the Declaration and make it a reality through concrete steps.

The creation of local, national and global networks is essential for indigenous peoples where interdependence extends to all forms of life, ranging from economic to social affairs, from trade to politics, to the survival of indigenous cultures, traditional knowledge, languages and spirituality. Establishing networks represents an important strategy in the fight for recognition and respect of fundamental human rights, which in

turn can open spaces for dialogue, exchange ideas, and can generate mutual understanding.

Through media, indigenous peoples can exercise their rights to free, prior and informed consent and their right to self-determination, in terms of defining their priorities and setting the agenda in order to advance those issues of particular interest for them. Dialogue and exchange can boost social mobilization and international cooperation with the aim of building a society based on equal opportunities and justice for all.

Media can also be an educational tool where the recording of culture and daily life of communities can be passed on to future generations.. Hence, indigenous media are indispensable tools for strengthening indigenous identity, for transmitting indigenous knowledge, traditions, values and spirituality and preserving indigenous languages. It can also help mobilize greater understanding and support for indigenous peoples from the larger public, and thereby building respect and recognition for diversity.

In their position paper presented for the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003, indigenous peoples asserted the right to “have the dignity and diversity of our cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations reflected in all forms of information disseminated by public and private media, including e-media”. To contrast the dissemination of stereotyped and discriminatory information about their cultures and situations, they emphasized that “independent indigenous owned media have a significant role to play in producing our own culturally sensitive content and thus providing adequate information services for indigenous peoples themselves, and means for intercultural education of the non-indigenous world aiming to promote intercultural understanding and to combat racism”. They reiterated that indigenous media, producing and broadcasting in indigenous languages, have great potential to assist in strengthening and preserving indigenous languages. Internet, as well as other new ICT applications including the new social media, could provide appropriate tools to promote intercultural education of indigenous cultures and situations and, thus, to overcome stereotypes as well as discriminatory attitudes.¹

The Declaration on the Rights of the Worlds’ Indigenous Peoples, in article 16, reflects these concerns and affirms the right of indigenous peoples “to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination”. At the same time, the Declaration calls upon States to ensure that cultural diversity is adequately reflected in both State-owned and privately owned media.

Key messages:

The interactive dialogue will address the following key issues:

- language preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge through the media;
- awareness-raising on indigenous issues, with particular reference to education on indigenous peoples’ rights as per the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

¹ “Indigenous position paper for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)”, Geneva, December 2003.

- realization of the right to self-determination and FPIC in terms of agenda-setting activities, influence over politics and decision-making process, mobilization around crucial issues;
- role of indigenous networks as forum for discussion and sharing of ideas, experiences, best practices and lessons learned among indigenous peoples around the world who share similar concerns and similar aspirations;
- role of media to create space for interchange and dialogue between indigenous peoples and government authorities;
- role of media as venue for mutual respect and understanding within national societies;
- role of media in promoting intercultural education and in overcoming stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards indigenous peoples; and
- the enabling role of media in supporting indigenous peoples' models of development that is according to their priorities, cultures and values.

The interactive dialogue will also consider the following questions:

- What is the role of indigenous media at the local regional, national and international levels?
- Which are the challenges posed by globalization, media and culture in the so called “digital age”?
- Can globalization of the media be considered as a form of colonization in terms of imposition of external worldviews over indigenous communities? Or does it represent an opportunity to network, to link to other indigenous peoples in the world, and to open up spaces for a genuine dialogue with the non-indigenous world?
- How can media – indigenous and non-indigenous – play an enabling role in realizing indigenous peoples' rights as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

Format:

The interactive dialogue will open at 3:30 pm (after the reading of official messages). The moderator will briefly introduce the interactive dialogue and the speakers. Thereafter, each of the speakers will be given an opportunity to make introductory comments. The moderator will then pose specific questions to each of the speakers who will intervene with brief presentations of experiences, practices and lessons learnt. A question and answer session will follow, where comments, questions, challenges, and suggestions from the floor will be taken. Speakers may intervene at any moment to respond to the audience, to each other, to the moderator, or to raise any additional points. If time allows, speakers will be asked of final comments (2 minutes each) at the end of the discussion. The panel will close by 6:00. SPFII made arrangements for web-casting the event and will make the archived video available on the UN website thereafter. Short clips, videos, etc. will be screened between the presentations.

Other components:

1. Power point presentations
2. Video screening