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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Implementation of recommendations on
the six mandated areas and on MDGs**

Information received from the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

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Summary

Since 1994, UNIFEM has been developing projects and programmes that respond to the need to incorporate gendered indigenous issues in the forefront of our agenda. Integrating indigenous women's rights is fundamental to UNIFEM and it seeks to more fully develop and expand its existing projects while eliciting the cooperation and support of other UN agencies.

UNIFEM's programme focuses on advocacy for indigenous women's rights and eliminating discrimination against them. UNIFEM has been working to mainstream gender and women's human rights into its diverse programmes, priority issues such as combating violence against women, including women in peace processes among others, while engaging indigenous groups, particularly women.

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A. Response to the Forum's recommendations to UNIFEM at the Forum's Fifth Session

Recommendation 47:

1. UNIFEM has been introducing indigenous women's perspective in its work on violence against women (VAW) using existing internal processes and innovative initiatives addressing the issue in indigenous communities. For example, through the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women¹, UNIFEM is supporting a partner NGO in combating violence against women in Guatemala in Mayan communities. The initiative will document the magnitude of the problem in four Quetzaltenango localities and will raise awareness on VAW in these communities. It aims to increase knowledge on human rights of women in their struggle against VAW, combat the phenomenon by empowering women and strengthening government's response to VAW. Also within the framework of the Trust Fund, UNIFEM is supporting a project in Chiapas, Mexico, to combat gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS in a multicultural context. The NGO will conduct a qualitative study to examine how young indigenous women perceive the phenomenon of VAW and HIV/AIDS. It will also strengthen prevention strategies and initiatives, and contribute to raising awareness and disseminating information about the connection of violence and HIV/AIDS.

2. UNIFEM's work to raise awareness in VAW among indigenous communities, includes an initiative within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women, a global campaign in which UNIFEM is taking the lead in involving partner UN agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean; UNIFEM in partnership with UNESCO, supported the training of 50 indigenous journalists, including 52% women, from community radios in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru

¹ The Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women was established by General Assembly resolution 50/166 in 1996 and is managed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

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on VAW prevention. Journalists from 17 radio stations participated in the First Contest for Radio Programmes on “Gender and Violence against Kichwa and Quechua Women Prevention”, by producing radio programmes to prevent violence in indigenous communities. The programmes were widely broadcast by local radio stations in indigenous communities.

3. UNIFEM also supported several human rights NGOs in the northern border of Ecuador and in the Peruvian Amazonia to work with women and men in indigenous communities to recognize VAW as a problem and explore mechanisms to effectively address it. As result, indigenous communities in both countries have increased their awareness and have the capacity to address VAW both through traditional and western justice systems. NGOs are now better informed and trained to work on the issue. Due to the innovative character of the initiative, UNIFEM decided to generate and disseminate knowledge on the work in partnership with NGOs, on violence in indigenous communities and building capacity in Ecuador and Peru.

4. In order to promote knowledge sharing on VAW and indigenous women, UNIFEM supported the translation and publication of the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI) report “Mairin Iwanka Raya: Indigenous Women Stand against Violence”. The report serves as a companion to the UN Secretary-General’s study on violence against women. This will make the report broadly available to constituencies in the region, especially to indigenous women from Latin America.

5. UNIFEM’s commitment to combat violence against indigenous women includes the support to “Red Ada” in Bolivia to work on femicide by developing an advocacy strategy to ensure that laws and policies address this problem. This strategy includes an in depth study on femicide in rural areas, a proposal to include femicide in the penal code and workshops with members of the justice

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sector. The strategy is still underway and has so far contributed to creating awareness on the issue both between decision makers and the general public, through the collection and dissemination of information.

6. Initiatives to strengthen indigenous women's rights to combat VAW include a project in the region of Sucumbíos in Ecuador, where UNIFEM and UNFPA supported The Kichwa Women Association in a project to sensitize and create capacities on gender based violence as one of the problems limiting women's participation and exercise of their rights at the community level. The project was implemented in Bitter Lake, Cascales and Putumayo and used a strategy based on capacity building workshops, awareness raising and lobbying authorities of the Federation of Kichwa organizations. Similarly, in Bolivia, the organization Gregoria Apaza, with the support of UNIFEM, is implementing a project in Alto, Bolivia that aims to contribute to the attainment of individual and collective rights of young indigenous women, as well as orientating and training them on HIV/AIDS prevention, and the reduction of gender-based violence.

B. Other significant information regarding recent policies, programmes, budgetary allocations or activities regarding indigenous issues

7. As part of UNIFEM's work to strengthen indigenous women's organizations, in the Andean Region UNIFEM supported a project carried out by the Enlace Continental Sur de Mujeres Indígenas, a network of indigenous women's organizations. It included consultations in the five Andean countries with indigenous women organizations to identify their priorities in the political sphere. The project ended with an Andean Seminar that took place in Lima, Peru which resulted in an agenda that prioritizes strengthening indigenous women's political participation. This document was handed to the Executive Secretary of the Andean Community of Nations.

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8. In Mexico, UNIFEM has provided training and technical assistance to indigenous women's networks to advocate for poverty reduction policies that take into account their perspective and demands. As a result of this support, a Follow up Committee was established with 40 representatives of indigenous women's network, to prepare future meetings and develop an action plan. As part of this effort UNIFEM supported the III Meeting of Indigenous Women in Mexico City in August 2006 in which indigenous women developed a long term Action Plan and the principles on the work of the UN System with the indigenous Women's were ratified. The main result of this III Meeting in Mexico were a long term plan for indigenous women on MDGs, and a commission for coordination and follow up.

9. UNIFEM has been working with indigenous women to influence public policies and poverty reduction plans to include a gender and multiethnic perspective. In Brazil, Bolivia, Guatemala and Paraguay, UNIFEM is implementing a programme that aims at including gender equality, with racial and ethnic perspectives in policies in order to reduce the persistent inequality in Latin America. A main component of this programme is the systematization of information and development of knowledge in the issue. Studies have been concluded in issues of poverty, race, ethnicity and gender in the region, and an analysis of poverty reduction programmes in the four countries involved. As part of these efforts along with aims to strengthen the representation of indigenous women's networks at decision making levels, UNIFEM's office for Brazil and the Southern Cone supported the "Meeting of the Regional Networks of Black and Indigenous Women" to prepare the "Regional Conference of the Americas – Advances and Challenges to the Action Plan Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and connected forms of Intolerance" which took place in Brasilia in July 2006.

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10. UNIFEM's work in the area of governance and peace and security includes several initiatives in partnership with indigenous women. For example, UNIFEM is supporting the post conflict reconstruction process in Guatemala in the framework the "Women, Peace and Security" project whereby UNIFEM is supporting the Indigenous Women National Congress to develop a common agenda for indigenous women's organizations and highlighting the importance of including the rights of indigenous Women in the peace process.

11. UNIFEM sees that indigenous women's participation in decision making spaces, including political participation is key to transforming their demands into governmental policies; therefore, it has been supporting the strengthening of indigenous women's capacity to advocate and participate in key spaces. For example, in Bolivia UNIFEM is supporting indigenous women's advocacy in the process of the consolidation of the Constitutional Assembly. This initiative is supporting indigenous women at the national level in presenting their demands, focusing on poverty issues, in order to include these demands in the new Political Constitution of the State. Also, a UNIFEM lead project, financed by UNDP and CIDA, that includes working with indigenous and mestizo women, will work to mainstream of gender in the Constitutional Assembly through, inter alia, monitoring, advocacy, dissemination of information, capacity-building by an exchanging best practices with Ecuador and Venezuela.

12. In Ecuador, UNIFEM has been working to strengthen the capacity of local women leaders to participate in political processes. As a result, in the Province of Tungurahua, a participatory project which included consultations and training of women leaders, including those from rural indigenous

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communities from the nine municipalities led, inter alia, to the election, for the first time, of two women leaders - one indigenous and one “mestizo” - to integrate the local government committee.

13. UNIFEM is involved in several interagency initiatives on indigenous issues, among others, it is part of the interagency group on indigenous issues in Mexico, and in Ecuador as a result of UNIFEM’s participation the UN Thematic Group of Intercultural Rights, the gender perspective was included in the discussion its programming and execution of activities with the indigenous and afro descendents communities

14. UNIFEM, in partnership with UNEP, supported a workshop for indigenous women from Mexico and Central America in July and November 2006 that strengthened the capacity of indigenous women on water conservation, resource sustainability, and community radio broadcasting for approximately 30 women. The broadcast material will be disseminated in the indigenous communities’ languages. As result of the workshop, a work plan was developed to link the work in community radios among indigenous women and non indigenous women at national level.

15. Regarding indigenous women’s access to information, the *III Know How Conference* “Weaving the Information Society: a Gender and Multicultural Perspective”, was held in Mexico City at the recommendation of the Women Movement’s International Information and Archives Center (IIAV, Holland), in August 2006, with 350 participants world-wide, including the Mexican Documentation Centers Network (*Red de Bibliotecas*), invited by UNIFEM. The main objectives of the conference were to promote Women’s libraries and networks and develop specific policies for indigenous and rural access to information.