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The Message Stick¹ highlights the activities undertaken by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) as well as its Secretariat. It is produced by SPFII staff. Photos: Broddi Sigurdarson

World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

On 16 November 2010 the Third Committee of the General Assembly adopted a resolution on indigenous issues which included a decision to organize a world Indigenous Peoples Conference in 2014. The venue and other modalities of the conference will be discussed at open-ended consultations between Member States and indigenous peoples' representatives.



The full text of Paragraph 8 from the Resolution on Indigenous Issues

8. Decides to organize a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly, to be known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, to be held in 2014, in order to share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of Indigenous peoples, including to pursue the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and invites the President of the General Assembly to conduct open-ended consultations with Member States and with indigenous peoples' representatives in the framework of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as well as with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur in order to determine the modalities for the meeting, including indigenous peoples' participation at the Conference;

A/C.3/65/L.22/Rev.1

[Click here to download the full Resolution.](#)

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.



USA and Canada endorse UNDRIP

In separate announcements that were just over one month apart from each other the last remaining countries that had voted against the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, announced their support for the Declaration. On the occasion of each of the announcements, statements were made by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Permanent Forum.

Statement by Carlos Mamani Condori, Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues



I welcome Canada's endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In doing so, the Government of Canada has

reaffirmed the principles of respect, non-discrimination and good faith enshrined in the Declaration.

I also congratulate the Canadian representatives of Indigenous Peoples who patiently exerted extraordinary efforts for this Declaration, which embodies the most important rights we and our ancestors have long fought for; our right of self-determination, our right to own and control our lands, territories and resources, our right to free, prior and informed consent, among others.

The endorsement by Canada of the Declaration is an important step in the right direction towards building and strengthening the relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples within Canada, and indeed with indigenous peoples throughout the world.

I look forward to seeing increased commitment of Canada as well as the whole international community to work towards the full and effective implementation of the Declaration and to protect, respect and fulfil indigenous peoples collective and individual human rights.

Finally I would like to encourage those states that have not yet done so, to endorse the Declaration.

Statement by Tonya Gonella Frichner, Vice-Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues



I welcome the announcement of President Obama that the United States formally supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples. This is an important milestone that signifies that the international community has reached consensus on the Declaration. Now that we all agree, let's get to work and move forward and implement the Declaration.

The fact remains that indigenous peoples continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty, poor health, discrimination and other ills. We have been uprooted from our lands, deprived of our natural resources and our cultures denigrated. Hundreds of indigenous languages are in danger of extinction. This is a situation that must be rectified and the Declaration, which was drafted in close cooperation between indigenous peoples and governments, points the way forward. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an important human rights instrument that

guarantees indigenous peoples the right to self determination as well as their collective rights.

I look forward to working with the United States as well as other countries toward full implementation of the Declaration with no reservations.

Midterm assessment of the progress made in the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

At its Sixty-fourth Session the General Assembly discussed the findings of the Secretary General's *report on the Midterm assessment of the progress made in the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People* (A/65/166).

On the basis of information received from 19 organizations of the United Nations system, international organizations and the United Nations Secretariat, from 11 Member States and from 11 indigenous peoples' organizations the report provides an analysis and examples of the progress made towards the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Second Decade.

The report concludes that substantive advances have been made towards achievement of the goal and objectives of the Decade. The report finds that activities implemented in the area of indigenous peoples' issues are typically not directed specifically towards achieving the goal and objectives of the Second Decade, although to a large extent they are aligned with them.

The report finds that at the end of the first Decade (1995-2004), although indigenous peoples had been effective in utilizing the United Nations system for dialogue and awareness-raising, they had achieved only

sporadic impact on the policies of United Nations agencies and affiliated institutions and on the actual implementation of programmes and projects. Thus the adoption in 2007 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be identified as one of the major gains during the first half of the Second Decade.

The role the Declaration has had in the consolidation of a human rights-based approach to indigenous peoples' issues at the intergovernmental and national levels is substantial. However, a substantial gap is still to be identified between intentions at the policy level and the actual implementation of specific objectives of the Second Decade. The report stresses that further efforts must be made to transform initiatives at the policy level into effective action for and with indigenous peoples.

Other areas of progress are in relation to the engagement of indigenous peoples' organizations in advocacy for equality, application of international normative instruments, including the Declaration and in challenging governments, the private sector and international organizations to implement international norms on indigenous people's rights. In that respect some international and inter-governmental organizations have developed and launched specific institutional policies on indigenous peoples. In relation to development issues it is also significant how the indigenous peoples' movement has proposed alternative approach to the understanding of development and progress.

The United Nations system and some Member States have initiated a dialogue around the concept of development with culture and identity to which the Permanent Forum made a considerable contribution at its ninth session. At the national level,



applications of culturally adapted approaches have mainly occurred in the educational and health sectors, but some countries, notably Ecuador and Bolivia have engaged in a redefinition of the concept of development. However, the fundamental issue of free, prior and informed consent and its full application remains a challenge in the majority of States and also in international development programmes.

The report also found that within the United Nations system, the establishment of specific task forces on indigenous peoples' issues and the inclusion of indigenous peoples' issues in the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes, including through the issuance of the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues in 2008, have contributed significantly to increased institutional awareness of indigenous peoples' issues and to the operationalization and initiation of programmes and initiatives specifically targeting those issues. However remains a substantial challenge, and one of the central recommendations of the report is that programmes and activities must be strengthened so as to meet the needs of the world's indigenous peoples, as one of the most politically, socially and economically marginalized groups worldwide.

Along with the full application and implementation of the Declaration, Governments are also called upon to further the recognition of the indigenous peoples in their countries and to establish national legislative frameworks for indigenous peoples' individual and collective rights, and to develop institutional policies and mechanisms so as to engage effectively on indigenous peoples' issues, taking as a

point of reference the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



Full report is online here:

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/Second_decade_midterm.pdf

All information presented by Member States, UN agencies and intergovernmental bodies and from indigenous people's organizations is available here:

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/second_mid_term_eval.html

Tenth Session of the Permanent Forum

Preparations for the tenth session have already begun. Online pre-registration will open on the UNPFII website in late January 2011. Everyone is encouraged to pre-register early, especially those who need visas in order to travel to the United States.

This year is a review year and there will be no *special theme* at the tenth session. Nevertheless there will be a wide range of issues that will be discussed at the Tenth Session, including:

- The Forum will be reviewing its recommendations on *economic and social development, the environment and free, prior and informed consent*.



- Half day regional discussion on *Latin America and the Caribbean*.
- Half day discussion on the theme *indigenous peoples and the right to water*.
- Half day to discussing *indigenous peoples and forests*, following up on the Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and Forests. 2011 is the International Year of Forests.
- Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The Forum will also discuss its mission to Colombia, which took place in the summer of 2010.
- Up to 11 reports on a wide range of issues from individual Forum Members are expected to be discussed.
- Discussions on the World Conference are to be expected under agenda item 7, Future work of the Permanent Forum.



The renovation of UN Headquarters is ongoing, so the UN continues to use the new North Lawn Building for most of its meetings. It is to be expected that the plenary meetings of the Permanent Forum will take place in that building. The renovation will continue to pose a

challenge for organizers of side events. Most side events will take place in UN buildings outside of the main buildings. SPFII will do its best to accommodate the needs of side event organizers.

Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and Forests

The Expert Group Meeting will take place at UN Headquarters in New York from 12 to 14 January 2011.

The meeting will be attended by international indigenous experts whose findings will be submitted to the tenth session of the Permanent Forum in May 2011. Representatives from member states, UN agencies, NGOs and indigenous peoples' organizations are free to attend as observers. Those who are interested in attending the meeting are advised to contact the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum by 1 January 2011 by email to indigenous_un@un.org

All documents of the meeting are posted on the EGM page, including the report of the EGM, as well as all of the papers submitted by the experts.

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/EGM_IPF.html

IASG Meeting and UNPFII Visit to WHO Headquarters

The annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group for Indigenous Issues was held at WHO Headquarters in Geneva on 16-17 September. The meeting was attended by Carlos Mamani, Chair of the Permanent Forum as well as Liliane Muzangi Mbela and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, members of the Permanent Forum. They also conducted a visit of WHO Headquarters on 15 September, where they met with various departments.



The IASG meeting covered a range of issues including the adoption of indigenous policies by UN Agencies, the compilation of best practices in relation to indigenous peoples and health, as well as reviewing the ninth session of the Permanent Forum and preparations for the tenth session. The report of the IASG meeting will be submitted to the tenth session of the Permanent Forum.

Special Elections at ECOSOC

At a special election of the Economic and Social Council on 15 December, Bertie Xavier from Guyana was elected to serve as a member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for the term 2011-2013, following an extremely close election. The election for the one vacancy (Ms. Mirian Masaquiza, gave up her seat as a Member of the Permanent Forum in order to serve the Forum within the Secretariat) was contested by Mr. Xavier and Ms. Monica Roxana Alvarez from Bolivia. Initially each of the candidates received 25 votes each, requiring a second round, where Mr. Xavier pulled ahead with a narrow margin of a single vote. The final count was 1 abstention, 25 for Ms. Alvarez and 26 for Mr. Xavier.

The Members of the Permanent Forum for the term 2011-2013 (beginning 1 January 2011) will be:

Elected by ECOSOC (nominated by Governments)

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|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Alvaro Esteban Pop | Guatemala |
| Andrei Nikiforov | Russia |
| Bertie Xavier | Guayana |
| Eva Biaudet | Finland |
| Helen Kaljulate | Estonia |
| Megan Davis | Australia |
| Paimaneh Hasteh | Iran |
| Simon William M'Viboudoulou | Congo |

Appointed by the President of ECOSOC (nominated by indigenous peoples' organizations)

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|----------------------|---------------|
| Mirna Cunningham | Nicaragua |
| Saul Vicente Vazquez | Mexico |
| Anna Naikanchina | Russia |
| Edward John | Canada |
| Raja Devashish Roy | Bangladesh |
| Dalee Sambo Dorough | United States |
| Valmaine Toki | New Zealand |
| Paul Kanyinke Sena | Kenya |

The Secretariat of the Permanent Forum

On 1 December Ms. Chandra Roy-Henriksen took over as Chief of the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum. Prior to joining SPFII Chandra was the Programme Coordinator of the Regional Initiative on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Development at UNDP. She also worked for an extended period on the promotion of Convention 169 at the ILO. On the same day, Ms. Mirian Masaquiza joined SPFII. In recent years, Mirian worked at the Ministry of Cultural and National Heritage in Quito, Ecuador; as well as for the Cabinet of the 63rd session of the President of the General Assembly and the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations.

The Secretariat 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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