

April 2011

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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

The Tenth Session of the Permanent Forum

The tenth session of the Permanent Forum will take place for two weeks from 16 to 27 May 2011 at UN Headquarters in New York. Over a thousand participants are expected to attend.

Review year

As this is a review year, the Forum will review recommendations and their implementation related to Economic and Social Development, the Environment and Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

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.

At its previous nine sessions, the Permanent Forum has made 131 recommendations related to Economic and Social Development, 127 on the Environment and 35 related to Free, Prior and Informed Consent. The Forum has received information about the implementation of about half of these recommendations. As of today, the Permanent Forum has made some 900 recommendations. The Forum has received information on the implementation of half of these recommendations.



Traditional Chief of the Onondaga Nation, Todadaho Sid Hill addresses the Ninth Session

Half day discussion on South and Central America and the Caribbean

This year, the Forum will devote a half day discussion to the indigenous peoples of South and Central America and the Caribbean region. This region has always been integral to the work of the Forum and in recent years, Members of the Permanent Forum have visited Bolivia, Paraguay and Colombia, at the invitation of their governments, to look at specific issues and make recommendations. Some of these issues include constitutional reforms, recognition of indigenous peoples and the



pluri-nationalist identity of states, and land and natural resources. The regional discussion will take place on Friday morning (20 May) from 10am-1pm.

Half day discussion on the right to water and indigenous peoples

Water is an important aspect of indigenous peoples' spirituality and takes the form of many water bodies such as seas, rivers, lakes, rain, snow, fog and clouds and is an inseparable part of their estates. As well as underpinning their social and economic well-being, indigenous people's relationship with waters, lands and its resources is crucial to cultural vitality and resilience.



From a previous session of the Permanent Forum

Indigenous rights to water are not adequately recognised in national laws and policies. Historically, indigenous peoples have been excluded from water management. The lack of engagement is compounded by the fact that indigenous peoples are marginalized from information pertaining to water institutions, technical information and regulations around water. Indigenous peoples' right to water is not limited to access to safe drinking water and sanitation but also closely linked to a range of other rights including self-determination, subsistence, health, land and resources and cultural and spiritual practices. Although the right to water is already protected in a

wide range of human rights instruments, including the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, there is a growing concern that this right needs to be given greater attention.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights believes that it is now time to consider access to safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right, defined as the right to equal and non-discriminatory access to a sufficient amount of safe drinking water for personal and domestic uses...²

Mission to Colombia

Responding to an invitation from the Government of Colombia, endorsed by the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (hereinafter "the Permanent Forum" or "the Forum") conducted a mission to Colombia from 5 to 9 July 2010. The purpose of the visit was to observe the situation of indigenous peoples that are victims of abuses related to the armed conflict and are in danger of extinction, and the situation of the Awá people. The mission was conducted with the support of the UN Country Team.

In their mission report, the Forum Members made some 60 recommendations to the Government as well as to the UN system in Colombia under the following categories:

- a) the Internal armed conflict
- b) Territory
- c) Consultation and free, prior and informed consent

² A/HRC/6/3 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the scope and content of the relevant human rights obligations related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation under international human rights instruments.

- d) Internal and external forced displacement
- e) Human rights abuses
- f) Self-determination
- g) Safeguard plans
- h) Early warning system
- i) Programmes, policies and dialogue mechanisms
- j) Regional cooperation and cross-border strategies



Members of the Permanent Forum in Colombia, Bartolome Clavero, Paimaneh Hasteh, Carlos Mamani and Margaret Lokawua. Photo: Arturo Requesens

The Forum will present its report at the tenth session. Representatives from the Government, the UN system and indigenous peoples from Colombia will discuss the findings of the mission as well as recommendations and follow-up.

In Depth Dialogue with UNICEF

During the second week of the session, the Permanent Forum will hold an in-depth dialogue with the United Nations Children's Fund. The main purpose of the in-depth dialogue is to obtain a better understanding of the functions of UNICEF and also to consider some of the challenges and opportunities faced by United Nations agencies such as UNICEF in fulfilling their mandates, with particular reference to indigenous peoples. The in-depth dialogue includes brief presentations from high level representatives of UNICEF as well as regional coordinators. There will be an interactive dialogue with Forum members

and UNICEF, and an opportunity for queries and clarifications from other participants including indigenous peoples' organizations. UNICEF's report is available on the PFII website.

Future Work

Under the agenda item *Future Work*, two important events will be prominent: the Rio +20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development to take place in 2012; and the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples which is scheduled for 2014.

Both meetings are of great significance to indigenous peoples and the Permanent Forum and will be discussed during the second week of the tenth session. There will also be side events that will consider both events.



Members of the Permanent Forum in La Paz, Bolivia

Side events at the tenth session

Over 50 side events will take place during lunch times as well as during the closed sessions of the Permanent Forum. These events will cover a wide range of issues such as climate change, reindeer herding, right to self determination, participation in elections, parliaments, and food sovereignty. The side events are organized by indigenous peoples' organizations, UN agencies, Governments and NGOs. The side event schedule is available at [the tenth session page](#).



Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Peoples and Forests 12-14 January 2011

The EGM on indigenous peoples and forests, which took place in January 2011 was attended by seven indigenous experts, four members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and a number of observers from member states, the UN system and indigenous peoples organizations.



From the EGM on Forests: Mattias Ahren, Jennifer Koinante and Marcial Arias

The conclusions and recommendations of the expert group meeting called upon States to recognize indigenous peoples' rights to forests; for the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and in the commemoration of the International Year of Forests, 2011; and for United Nations agencies to undertake a compilation of good practices on forests and indigenous peoples as well as a compilation of relevant provisions of United Nations human rights instruments for advocating, defending and promoting indigenous peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources.

Fraud alert

A fraudulent e-mail was recently sent from an e-mail address of the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. This was a scam that referred to "awards funds" a "lottery" and requests for personal details.

The Secretariat of the Permanent Forum does not charge any fees for submission of project proposals or for attendance at any of its meetings.

The United Nations does not charge any recruitment fees in relation to job applications.

The United Nations is not involved with any issues concerning lotteries or inheritance.

If you are a victim of any such fraud, please take all appropriate measures to protect against the unauthorized use of any personal information you may have provided as a result of the scam.

