



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

PRESS RELEASE

DEVELOPMENT POLICIES MUST HONOUR INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND IDENTITY

UN meeting to discuss “development with culture and identity”; other key issues include indigenous peoples in North America and indigenous peoples and forests

(New York, 16 April 2010) The impacts of development policies on indigenous peoples’ culture and identity will be the focus of a two-week meeting beginning Monday, 19 April at UN Headquarters in New York. Effective participation and consultation of indigenous peoples is central to such policies.

Almost 2,000 indigenous participants from all regions of the world will take part in the ninth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to engage with Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Member States, UN agencies and civil society.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will address the opening session of the Forum in the UN General Assembly Hall on Monday, 19 April.

The Forum meeting, taking place from 19 to 30 April, will specifically address Articles 3 and 32 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which guarantee indigenous peoples full and effective participation in development processes, including thorough consultation in the establishment of development programs and policies.

Indigenous peoples’ traditional knowledge and practices are increasingly being recognized as vital for conservation work and efforts to combat and adapt to climate change. Yet despite this recognition, indigenous cultures have been damaged more often than not by development policies that ignore their traditional sources of knowledge and cultural priorities and fail to respect their land rights. Development policies that take into account indigenous peoples’ culture and identity can be beneficial not only to indigenous peoples, but also for Member States and developing countries in particular.

Indigenous peoples of North America

Issues related to indigenous peoples in North America (i.e. Canada and the United States of America) will be the focus of a half-day discussion during the Forum meeting on Thursday, 22 April. The discussion will aim to identify both the challenges faced by indigenous peoples in the region, as well as positive measures of cooperation that can contribute to improvements in their situation.

Indigenous peoples and forests

For many indigenous peoples, their way of life and traditional knowledge have developed in tune with the forests on their lands and territories. Unfortunately, forest policies that treat forests as empty lands available for development often force indigenous peoples out of their homes. In addition, some



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conservation schemes establish wilderness reserves that deny forest-dwellers their rights. A half-day discussion on these issues will take place on Wednesday, 28 April. It is expected that a statement will be adopted for transmittal to the UN Forum on Forests at its next session.

Side Events

There will be more than 80 side events taking place during the two-week session, organized by Member States, UN entities, other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, the Secretariat and others.

A special screening of the movie AVATAR will take place on Saturday, 24 April at 6:00 p.m., including a question-and-answer discussion with AVATAR Director James Cameron (*attendance by invitation only*).

The opening of the exhibit, “Indigenous Peoples and Self-Determination,” and a cultural event will take place on Tuesday evening, 20 April, in the Visitors’ Lobby of the United Nations.

The outcome of the Forum’s ninth session is expected to be a report to UN’s Economic and Social Council, which will include draft decisions recommended for adoption by the Council.

Background

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2000. The Forum provides expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the UN system through the Council; raises awareness and promotes the integration and coordination of relevant activities within the UN system; and disseminates information on indigenous issues.

The Permanent Forum is comprised of 16 independent experts, functioning in their personal capacity. The Economic and Social Council appoints the members, eight of whom are nominated by governments and eight by indigenous organizations in their regions.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

A press conference with Mr. Carlos Mamani, Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, together with, Permanent Forum Member Ms. Tonya Gonnella Frichner and a representative from a Member State (TBC) will take place on Monday, 19 April, at 1:15 p.m. at UN Headquarters in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium.

The press conference and the morning session on the opening day of the Forum session will be webcast live at www.un.org/webcast

For journalists without UN press accreditation, please refer to the website of the Media and Accreditation Liaison Unit for details: <http://www.un.org/media/accreditation/> or contact: +1 212 963 6934.

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For more information on the Ninth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, please see: www.un.org/indigenous

