

**International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples- 9 August 2011**  
**Message from Michelle Bachelet,**  
**Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women**

On this International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we salute the extensive contributions they make to their societies through traditional knowledge, cultural and linguistic diversity and vital role as the caretakers of the planet. The theme for this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, "*Indigenous designs: celebrating stories and cultures, crafting our own future*", provides a real opportunity to bring the voices of indigenous peoples to the global stage.

Despite their wealth of knowledge and wisdom, many indigenous communities live in situations of poverty and discrimination. While indigenous peoples number approximately 370 million, and make up 5 per cent of the world's population, they are 15 per cent of the world's poor, and about one-third of the world's 900 million extremely poor rural people.

Women in indigenous communities are the most marginalized. They often lack access to education, health care and land, and are subjected to violence, including in the contexts of trafficking and armed conflict.

Yet, women are also the agents of change in their communities. Indigenous women have worked relentlessly to mobilize and push international actors to recognize the challenges they face, and to guarantee their individual and collective rights and sustainable development for their communities.

Supporting the voices of indigenous women, and their economic empowerment, political leadership and ending violence is a cornerstone of our work at UN Women. We will continue to support the leadership and engagement of indigenous women in the years ahead, including in international forums such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Rio+20 Conference in 2012.

On this International Day of the World's Indigenous peoples, UN Women urges renewed commitment to advance the status of indigenous peoples worldwide, including indigenous women, through meaningful engagement in decision making, efforts to end gender-based violence and improving women's economic standing. Only then can we move towards sustainable development and ensure real impact on the wellbeing of indigenous communities.