



## MESSAGE STICK

### United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Quarterly Newsletter

Prepared by the United Nations Secretariat for the Permanent  
Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Division for Social Policy and Development, DESA, United Nations

**Vol.1. No.1. June to September 2003**

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##### Welcome!

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of MESSAGE STICK<sup>1</sup>, the quarterly E-Newsletter from the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. MESSAGE STICK seeks to reach everyone interested in indigenous issues and present the activities of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and its Secretariat. The Forum, which met at the United Nations for the first time in May 2002 was created by the United Nations Economic and Social Council to:

- Discuss indigenous issues within the Council's mandate, including economic and social development, culture, health, environment, education and human rights;
- Provide expert advice and recommendations to the Council and to programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations;

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- Raise awareness about indigenous issues, and help to integrate and coordinate activities in the UN system.
- Prepare and disseminate information on indigenous issues.

The Forum is made up of 16 independent experts, functioning in their personal capacities, with eight of the members nominated by indigenous peoples and eight nominated by Governments. The Permanent Forum is assisted by the Secretariat of the Forum (UNSPFII).

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous People is an accomplishment built on the efforts of successive generations of indigenous peoples, and it represents the chance, for the first time, for indigenous peoples to be able to speak for themselves and to present their views as full-fledged members of a United Nations body. To access the list of members of the UNPFII, please visit our website at:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/members.htm>

MESSAGE STICK seeks to provide information on the ongoing activities of the Forum, as well as on other upcoming UN activities related to indigenous issues. We hope you find its contents informative, and look forward to your feedback.

*The Secretariat of the UNPFII*



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#### Highlights of activities:

##### June

The report of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (available online at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/documents.htm>) was processed by the Secretariat in June, and consultations commenced with UN agencies and other bodies to promote the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the Forum. An information note was sent to indigenous organizations advising them that the report was available on the web-page of the Permanent Forum; those without internet access could request hard copies to the Secretariat on the following address:

Secretariat of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues

2 UN Plaza, Room DC2-1772

New York, NY 10017

Tel: (1) 917-367-5100

In view of the High-Level Segment of [ECOSOC] on Rural Development, the Secretariat coordinated inputs from Members of the Permanent Forum and forwarded it to the Bureau of ECOSOC. As a result of this, references to indigenous peoples were included in the final paper adopted by the Council.

The Secretariat of the Forum carried out consultations with the Secretariat of ECOSOC with reference to the elections for the Permanent Forum for the period of 2005-2007. A call for nominations for candidates from indigenous organizations was issued at the end of June with a deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2004.

Briefing session and consultations of the UNSPFII with the NGO Committee on the Decade of the World's Indigenous People, Friends of the Forum, the Intra-departmental Task Force on Indigenous Issues and the Inter-agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues (New York Offices) also took place during the month of June.

Mr. Tamang, member of the UNPFII, participated at the WIPO Inter-governmental Seminar on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore, held in Isfahan, Iran, from 16 – 18 June, 2003.

##### July

The report of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum was released in the first week of July.

The Permanent Forum's Chairperson, Mr. Ole Henrik Magga, attended the regular session of ECOSOC in Geneva within the context of the discussion of the report of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and of relevant draft decisions and recommendations. Mr. Magga also participated at the ECOSOC Meeting with the Chairpersons of Functional Commissions. Mr. Magga made a statement at the ECOSOC Plenary. The ECOSOC took note of the report of the Second Session by consensus and all the draft decisions proposed by the Forum were adopted (two of them with revisions). The text of the two decisions, 2003/301 and 2003/306 is available on our website. Please visit the following address: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/documents.htm>. There you will also find decision 2003/307 on "the review of indigenous issues within the UN system". The Chairperson also made a statement at the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Mr.



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Magga addressed the WGIP regarding recommendations on human rights provided by the Second Session of the Permanent Forum and future collaboration between the Permanent Forum, the WGIP and the Special Rapporteur. Mr. Magga also met with the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. Other members of the UNPFII present at the Working Group were Mr. Littlechild and Mr. Kouevi.

Whilst in Geneva, the UNPFII met with DOCIP, the World Council of Churches and briefed the Indigenous Caucus of the WGIP on Forum developments.

Also during the month of July, the Secretariat of the Forum liaised with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division, UN agencies, indigenous experts and Ms. Strogalsnikova, member of the UNPFII, regarding preparations for the Workshop on Data-Collection and Disaggregation, (19-21 January 2004).

#### August

The month of August is an important month for the Secretariat of the Forum for Indigenous Issues, as the 9<sup>th</sup> of August is the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. The Secretariat prepared and hosted celebrations on this day with a diverse group of high-level UN representatives, the NGO community and local indigenous peoples. Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Magga, Chairperson of the Forum for Indigenous Issues and another five Heads of UN Agencies issued

statements on the celebration of this important day.

During this month, Mr. Matias Alonso, member of the Permanent Forum, prepared independent expert paper on "Indigenous peoples and the Information Society" for the World Summit on the Information Society Pre-Com which will take place in Geneva in early September.

#### September

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, two of the Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Mr. Littlechild and Ms. Nicolaisen, participated in the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) special discussion day on "The Rights of Indigenous Children". They presented an opening and a closing statement. The CRC's statement and recommendations on the indigenous child can be found on the UNPFII's website under <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/documents.htm>. In September also, Mr. Magga, Ms. Nicolaisen and Mr. Littlechild took the opportunity to meet with WIPO to analyze ways of the UNPFII collaborating with WIPO and assist each other in their shared goals.

As part of the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, the Secretariat of the Forum for Indigenous Issues participated in meetings with Member States, NGOs and indigenous representatives.



During the month of September, Mr. Magga, Chairman of the Permanent Forum, had a busy schedule of meetings, which included, among others, meetings with Ms. Angela King, Assistant Secretary General on Gender Issues, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Ambassador Andreas D. Mavroyiannis of Cyprus, Chair of the Host Country Committee, and various journalists for newspapers and magazines including the UN Chronicle and a number of Scandinavian journalists. Mr. Magga also spoke at the Annual Department of Public Information/NGO Conference on the subject

The Secretariat for the Permanent Forum has several internship posts available for students interested on indigenous issues (see SPFII website for more information:) <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/internships.htm> The first intern intake commenced on 8 September.

The Secretariat has distributed evaluation forms of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum to Members of the Forum, Friends of the Forum, Indigenous Peoples Organizations and the UN system. Their feedback will be used to assist in the preparations of the Third Session.

### **UNSPFII Information Strategy for Indigenous Children and Young People**

Another area of work in which the Secretariat of the Forum is focusing its efforts is that of indigenous children and youth. Building on good work already going within the UN system, the Secretariat is in the process of formalizing an information strategy for indigenous children and young people, which may include but is not limited to:

- “What's going on” video - Indigenous children;
- Brochure on the Permanent Forum developed for children;

- Logo competition ( please go to the PFII's website for complete information, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/news.htm>)
- School Cyberbus - UN on-line curriculum developed on Indigenous Issues
- Outreach to schools through the web-page and Cyber School Bus (with Bill Yotive, John Scott and Anouch Mkhitarian).

Possible Partners to accomplish these projects could be the United Nations Department of Public Information, the UN Cyberbus and UNICEF.

### **Summary for the quarter**

Within the context of mainstreaming efforts, UNSPFII made the following contributions, submissions and comments during this quarter:

- a. Annual Report of the Secretary-General
- b. Input regarding the Implementation of the Plan of Action for HIV/AIDS

Other work of the Secretariat during this period has included:

- a. Establishment of the Voluntary Fund for the Permanent Forum;
- b. Liaison with Donor States and Friends of the Forum to progress donations;
- c. Distribution of the recommendations of the Second Session and bilateral negotiations to establish UN system priorities and short, medium and long term goals;
- d. Progress the proposal for an Indigenous Pre-Summit at the World summit on Information Society;
- e. Discussions to prepare proposal for a 30 minute Permanent Forum Training video;
- f. Preparation of an Indigenous Children and Youth Information Strategy (including logo competition);
- g. Organization of three parallel events at the WIPO Inter-governmental Committee on

Traditional Knowledge (including briefings to Member States, UN system and Indigenous peoples representatives regarding the WIPO relevant recommendations arising from the Second Session of the Forum);

- h. Preparations for the Statistics Workshop 19-21 January 2004;
- i. Preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society and Indigenous Pre-Summit;
- j. Substantive support to the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues (IASG) Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September and follow-up of UNPFII recommendation to enlarge participation in IASG.

### **Upcoming events**

Mr. Magga, Chairperson of the Forum, will participate in the Council of Europe Conference to mark the entry into force of the Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities to be held on 31 October 2003.

Mr. Littlechild, Member of the Forum, will participate in the OHCHR Special Rapporteur Seminar on “Indigenous peoples and the Administration of Justice” to be held in Geneva in November 2003.

27. Other events and meetings of significance include:

- UNPFII Workshop on Data Collection and Dissagregation, New York (19-21 January 2004)
- Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society (Geneva, 8 to 11 December, 2003), an official side event of the World Summit on the Information Society.