



MESSAGE STICK

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Quarterly Newsletter

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

Vol.1. No.2. September to December 2003

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Welcome to the second issue of MESSAGE STICK¹, the Newsletter from the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. In this second issue of MESSAGE STICK we present the activities that the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues has undertaken during the last part of the month of September and the months of October, November and December.

A major event during these months has been the visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, to Latin America, where he had the chance to meet with several indigenous communities and indigenous leaders. The UN Secretary-General emphasized the importance of maintaining the extraordinary diversity of indigenous cultures and the potential contribution their knowledge and values can make to poverty reduction, sustainable agriculture, and indeed to our conception of life. At the same time, he recognized the threat that many indigenous

communities suffer around the world, and the importance to fight to reverse such situations.

The Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society was held in December, organized by the UNSPFII, and had extremely interesting outcomes, that you will find in this newsletter and posted on our website, at the following address: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/index.html>

We hope that you find the contents of this newsletter of interest and that they promote the exchange of information on indigenous issues. We look forward to your feedback. For any matters, you can contact us at the following address: indigenouspermanentforum@un.org.

The Secretariat of the UNPFII

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.



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September

Activities undertaken during the first part of September were included in the first issue of MESSAGE STICK. Please visit our website to access the first issue: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/news.htm>

The activities described here took part during the second half of September. During these two weeks, the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNSPFII) undertook preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society. The UNSPFII attended preparation meetings in Geneva with Member States, NGOs and indigenous representatives. During such meetings, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) agreed to facilitate an indigenous pre-summit referred to as the *Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society* (please refer to the December section below for more information on this event).

Also during September, Members of the UNPFII, Mr. Kouevi, Mr. Jacanamijoy and Mr. Tamang participated in meetings in which they represented the UNPFII and spoke on its behalf. Mr. Kouevi participated in the Preparatory Committee for the World Bank Grants Facility for Indigenous Peoples, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 22-24 September, and Mr. Jacanamijoy and Mr. Tamang participated in the XII World Forestry Congress – Indigenous

Peoples' Forest Forum that was held in Quebec, Canada, from 21 to 28 September.

October

Several meetings to inform different organisations about the work of the UNPFII took place during the month of October. The UNSPFII briefed the group of Member States referred to as *Friends of the Forum* on the work of the Forum on the 29th of October. Other briefings were provided to the Intra-Departmental Task Force on Indigenous Issues of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to the Inter-Agency Support Group, and to several indigenous organisations and other NGOs, including the NGO Committee on the Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The UNSPFII continued to follow up the implementation of the recommendations of the Second Session of the Permanent Forum by the different United Nations agencies and programmes, and sent various communications to the relevant organisations to assist them in their reporting back at the Third Session of the Permanent Forum in May 2004.

The Chairperson of the UNPFII, Mr. Ole Henrik Magga, participated in the Council of Europe Conference to mark the 5th Anniversary of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, that was held on 31



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October. Mr. Magga was also invited to the Council of Europe's Conference on the 5th anniversary of the entry into force of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities that took place in Paris from 30 to 31 October 2003. Mr Magga delivered a speech on "Achieving Universal Primary Education". Members of the UNPFII, Mr. Jacanamijoy, Ms. Lux de Coti and Mr. Turpo participated at the World Indigenous and Peasant Congress held in Caracas, Venezuela, from 11-14 October.

Also during the month of October, the Central Executive Board (CEB) of the United Nations, which is the highest coordination body in the UN system, chaired by the Secretary-General and attended by the heads of all UN system specialized agencies, discussed indigenous issues, which had been placed on its agenda by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Among the work of the agencies regarding indigenous issues, the General Conference of UNESCO, at its 32nd Session, adopted an important resolution on the dialogue among civilizations. You will find the resolution in our website: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/documents/documents%20background.htm>

November

An expert seminar on "Indigenous Peoples and the Administration of Justice" took place in Madrid from the 12 to the 14 of November, 2003. The meeting was organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in cooperation with the Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia. Mr. Littlechild, member of the UNPFII, attended the meeting.

In response to UNESCO's invitation to its Conference on "Media, Pluralism and Endangered Cultures" held in the Dominican Republic from 3 to 6 November 2003, Ms. Lux de Coti and Mr. Turpo, Members of the UNPFII, attended the meeting in representation of the UNPFII.

Member of the UNPFII, Mr. Kouevi, participated at the 34th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, held in Banjul, Gambia, from 6 to 20 November. Mr. Magga and Ms.Trask, Chairperson and Member of the UNPFII respectively, participated at the 2003 session of the International Training Center of Indigenous Peoples, held in Nuuk, Greenland, from 24 November to 8 December.

Mr. Turpo, Member of the UNPFII, and Mr. Ole Henrik Magga, Chairperson of the UNPFII, participated at the "Second Encounter of Indigenous Communities in the High Andes and Amazon", held in



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the Quechua speaking Andean village of Mosoqllaqta, in the Department of Cuzco (Peru) from 5 to 9 November. This event was organized by Yachay Wasi, NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC. Yachay Wasi's encounters are always held in remote traditional villages with approval and full participation of the village's mayors.

Visit of the UN Secretary-General to Latin America



The Secretary-General meets indigenous advocates in Sta. Cruz, Bolivia.

In November, the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, travelled on official visit to Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile, and had the opportunity to underline indigenous issues on various occasions. Among those, the Secretary-General delivered a significant speech on the indigenous child while in Cuzco, Peru (see our website for more information on these events and to access the Secretary-General's speech on: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/photo/sgla.htm> and <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/news03.htm>).

The speech was translated into Spanish, Aymara, Guaraní and Quechua and is also available in those languages in our website. Mr. Turpo, Member of the UNPFII, held a brief meeting with the Secretary-General in Cuzco.



United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, meeting representatives of indigenous communities

December

The UNPFII Indigenous Fellowship Programme

December was the month of the launching of the UNPFII Indigenous Fellowship Programme. The aim of the UNPFII Indigenous Fellowship Programme is to give indigenous women and men the opportunity to gain knowledge across the broad mandate of the UNPFII, which includes issues of economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. This programme has a particularly practical focus: it aims to build the capacity of



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indigenous individuals and through them, of indigenous communities, in order to assist their organizations and communities in protecting indigenous peoples' lives. It is envisaged that the United Nations Permanent Forum's Indigenous Fellowship Programme will run from 1 March to 31 November, each year. A different timing could be selected for the first year of implementation of the programme. The Fellows will be based at the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues for nine or six months, depending on the availability of the fellow and of funds. During this period fellows will also experience short placements (up to 2 weeks) in other relevant United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes located in the North American region. UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank have already indicated their willingness to participate and host fellows.

The Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues agreed to facilitate a *Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society* (GFIPIS), as an official event of the *World Summit on the Information Society*. The UNPFII decided to host the Global Forum from 8-11 December in Geneva, and to make use of its mandate to provide a structure and framework for the proceedings. The UNPFII further agreed to put in place its

Bureau to facilitate the work of the meeting.

The Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society was one of the largest official parallel events of the World Summit on the Information Society. It was attended by representatives of 6 Member States (18 government departments of Member States), 9 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, 12 private sector participants and 90 indigenous and other non-governmental organizations and academic institutions. A total of 286 persons attended the Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society. The Global Forum examined both potentials and obstacles to the full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples in the Information Society. Obstacles included lack of basic community infrastructure, limited access to modern technologies and the urgent need for gender and age sensitive capacity building. Potentials included capabilities to access new marketplaces, increased indigenous networking (both regionally and internationally), new strategies to revitalize and pass on culture and languages, and the opportunity to fully participate in the new information and connectivity revolution facing humanity. The report of the Global Forum will be submitted to the Third Session of the UNPFII in May.



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Mr. Wilton Littlechild, Mr. Ole Henrik Magga and Ms. Mililani Trask, at the Global Forum of Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society.

Also in December, Mr. Magga, Chairperson of the UNPFII, and Mr. Tamang and Mr. Kouevi, Members of the UNPFII were invited and participated in consultations with FAO and IFAD in Rome. Mr. Turpo, Member of the UNPFII, participated in the Convention on Biological Diversity's Third Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Inter-sessional Working Group on Article 8 (j) held in Montreal, Canada, 8-12 December 2003.

Last but not least, as part of the efforts of the UNPFII to prioritize indigenous issues throughout the world, the UNPFII made a formal presentation to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) about indigenous issues and proposed that programmatic guidelines be reviewed in order to adequately cover the indigenous angle. The United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) subsequently proposed that indigenous issues be considered a priority of UNDG in 2004.