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Welcome to *MESSAGE STICK*¹, the newsletter that highlights the activities undertaken by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) as well as its Secretariat for the period from January to March 2008.

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.

International Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages, 8 to 10 January 2008, UNHQ, New York

The expert group meeting was attended by some 60 people including representatives from the United Nations system, five members of the Permanent Forum, other interested intergovernmental organizations, experts from indigenous organizations and interested Member States. The results of the meeting will be reported to the Permanent Forum at its seventh session in April 2008. The workshop was organized by the Secretariat of the Forum, following a recommendation of the Permanent Forum endorsed by the Economic and Social Affairs.

Presentations and discussions centered on the importance of linguistic diversity, the connection between language rights and all other fundamental rights, a concern for the lack of urgency while a majority of all indigenous languages are threatened with extinction and proposals for the revitalization, promotion and protection of indigenous languages. On 10 January 2008, the Workshop adopted, by consensus, the conclusions and recommendations.

To read the report and other documents of the Expert Group Meeting, please visit the following link

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/EGM_IL.html

Participation of UNPFII Members in other meetings

Participation of Ms. Canqui Mollo, Mr. Mamani and SPFII at the preparatory meeting to the seventh session of the UNPFII "The Stewardship role of Indigenous Peoples in biocultural diversity: The effects of deforestation and gas emissions in Climate Change", 17 – 19 March 2008, La Paz, Bolivia.

The Conference was organized by Fondo Indígena. The conference also included two days of consultation with the World Bank on the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. A total of 80 indigenous peoples' representatives, UN organizations based in La Paz and the World Bank participated in this conference.

On the first day of the Conference a number of comprehensive case studies presented by a number of major indigenous organizations in regards to the various regions in Latin America (The Amazon, the Andean and Central America). These case studies were well researched and provide enormous issues that indigenous peoples in Latin America are confronting in regards to Climate Change.

The second and third day of the conference was the consultation with the World Bank on the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. The indigenous participants made it clear that they were at the meeting to simply listen and take this information back to their organizations. They also wanted to know about the consultation process that the World Bank was carrying out. The World Bank explained that as result of discussion in Bali in December 2007 at the launch of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz of the Permanent Forum requested the Bank to carry out consultations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This was the Bank's third and final consultation.

There were a number of key issues identified by the conference participants including the effects of climate change;

adaptation and coping strategies and legal and institutional barriers. There were a number of recommendations aimed at States, United Nations agencies; inter-governmental bodies, universities and research institutes and civil society partners.

In terms of the World Bank consultations, there were a number of key issues identified such as lack of regulation in the carbon trading markets; the fact that funding goes to the private sector rather than indigenous peoples/communities themselves because of the Bank's perceived lack of capacity in indigenous communities in administering such grants, indigenous peoples will have to change the tenure of the lands in order to accommodate the bank, in instances where indigenous peoples' land tenure is insecure due to conflict etc, the World Bank will not work with such groups.

Overall, there was a belief that it was good to have the World Bank at the meeting but many participants were highly critical of the Bank and the FCPF and that bank staff were not able to answer issues raised and several key concerns remain unresolved, especially in regards to the Bank's policies not being in line with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The report of this Conference will feed into the Forum's 7th Session 21 April – 2 May 2008.

Participation of Mr. Id Balkassm and SPFII at the Hearing on the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in view of the Seventh Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous peoples, 31 March, European Union, Brussels.

The European Parliament decided to have the first ever Hearing on Indigenous Peoples, within the framework of its Sub-Committee on Human Rights. The Hearing took place in Brussels on 31 March 2008. An European Union Parliament Delegation is being prepared to attend the seventh

session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) this month.

SPFII presented an overview of the past and present indigenous issues at the UN, with highlights of the major institutional achievements, including the establishment of the UNPFII and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN-DECRIPS). SPFII underlined the relevance of indigenous peoples to Europe (history of colonization, natural resources extracted from indigenous ancestral territories, indigenous peoples living in the European Continent, indigenous migrant workers living in various European countries) and the role of European Governments and the EU Parliament, welcoming the recent enhanced interest and calling for measures that will strengthen accountability and democratic institutions that respect and promote indigenous peoples' rights (including through participation of EU countries in international financial institutions, especially the World Bank and the European Investment Bank).

Mr. Hassan Id Balkassm, Member of the UNPFII also made a presentation, focusing especially on the UN-DECRIPS and on indigenous peoples in Africa.

The EU Parliament also heard a presentation from Mr. Watori, Indigenous Parliamentarian from West Papua, Indonesia.

The Hearing was chaired by Mrs Helene Flautre, who underlined the importance of the Declaration, expressed concern about bio-fuels and their impact on indigenous peoples and also referred to Australia's recent apology to the Lost Generations.

After the Hearing, SPFII met with the Head of the Human Rights Directorate of the European Parliament to discuss arrangements for the participation of the EU Parliamentarian at the UNPFII's session.

DPI/NGO Briefing on “Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change”, 20 March 2008, UNHQ, New York, USA.

Climate change is altering the way in which human beings coexist with their environment. The briefing examined how the issue of climate change applied to indigenous peoples, who maintain an intimate relationship with the land. Speakers included H.E. Mr. Colin D. Beck, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Solomon Islands to the United Nations; Ms. Elsa Stamatopoulou, Chief, Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; and Mr. Roberto Mukaro Borrero (Taino), Chairperson, NGO Committee on the International Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples.

H.E. Mr. Collin D. Beck spoke about the effect climate change had on small island states and the challenges for indigenous peoples of the Solomon Islands. He noted the great diversity among the half million people living in his country, 90 percent of which belong to indigenous groups who speak 80 different languages. Ambassador Beck stressed that all of the basic needs of indigenous peoples came from natural resources, which were greatly influenced by the changes in the environment. Climate change issues varied within each indigenous community and were related to their specific geographical region.

The frequent occurrence of natural disasters such as high tides, tsunamis and cyclones in disaster prone areas caused the progress made in certain locations to regress. Ambassador Beck also mentioned the subject of indigenous peoples migrating to bigger islands because of climate change. With migration came the threat of conflict between different ethnic groups and the loss of traditional culture. Furthermore, urbanization contributed to increased poverty. The Ambassador called for the need to move away from policy making into taking action on the ground.

Ms. Elsa Stamatopoulou discussed the importance of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which will be focusing on climate change and indigenous peoples during this year's session, more specifically the issues of indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands. Ms. Stamatopoulou stressed the importance of raising awareness on issues faced by the indigenous peoples, and said that the effect of climate change on indigenous peoples was a matter of survival. She stated that indigenous peoples were "hardly contributors to climate change, but suffered the gravest consequences". And yet, the voices of indigenous peoples have not yet entered the mainstream of the climate change debate. Ms. Stamatopoulou also mentioned a study on biofuel development and its impact on the territories and the livelihoods of the indigenous populations. For example, corn used to fill up one SUV tank with ethanol would feed one person for a year. Ms. Stamatopoulou cited the right to food and blamed development of biofuels for the 40 percent increase in food costs worldwide. Ms. Stamatopoulou concluded by stating that solidarity was an important factor in addressing indigenous issues.

Mr. Roberto Borrero greeted the audience and introduced himself in his native indigenous language. He said that climate change was about the kind of world we were going to leave for our children and their children. He called for long-term rather than short-term solutions. Mr. Borrero examined the importance of indigenous peoples to be actively involved in preserving their culture and land. He defended the right to ownership by indigenous peoples and discussed the difficulties indigenous peoples encountered when trying to protect or preserve the land they did not own. Mr. Borrero stated that indigenous peoples noticed climate change years before the climate change debate started. For example, some indigenous elders gathering plants for traditional medicines could no longer find those. Mr. Borrero also mentioned the difficulties indigenous peoples faced accessing mainstream

healthcare. He concluded by saying "for many years people have seen ice melting around the world, now it is time to melt the ice in the hearts of men."

During the question-and-answer period, a question was asked in regards to the effects nuclear testing had on indigenous peoples. Ambassador Beck mentioned the nuclear treaty preventing any more testing in his country. He also responded to a question regarding the urbanization of indigenous peoples by stressing the importance of investing in the development of rural areas. This would result in indigenous peoples not having to travel to urban areas for school or work. A question was asked about what NGOs could do to help indigenous peoples. Mr. Borrero referred to the CONGO website as a source for practical ways NGOs could assist indigenous peoples. He noted one of the most important ways NGOs could help was by disseminating information on indigenous peoples to the mainstream media and local communities.

The briefing was attended by about 100 representatives of NGOs, United Nations and Permanent Mission staff. The archived webcast of the event is available at <http://www.un.org/webcast/2008.html>

Source: United Nations, DPI/NGO Resource Centre, Room L-1B-31

Indigenous Women Issues

Seventh annual session of the Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), 19 to 21 February 2008, UNHQ, New York

The IANWGE meets annually in New York prior to the annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women. These once-a-year meetings have permitted a review of the activities of the different parts of the system during the previous year, providing feedback to agencies, fine-tuning of activities and ensuring relevant follow-up action by all members. The meetings have also created a structured policy discussion of emerging challenges, and identified issues of common concern for future attention. The results of the discussions at the meetings of the Network are often fed into the CSW session.

The seventh annual session of the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, chaired by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, was held from 19 to 21 February 2008, at UN Headquarters in New York.

This year report is organized as follows: Section II of the report sets out the matters for the consideration of the High-level Committees on Programme and Management of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). Section III contains an overview of actions and decisions adopted by the Network. Section IV contains a summary of conclusions reached by the Network on the items contained in the agenda. It will be available at IANGWE's website at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/>

Fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 25 February to 7 March 2008, UNHQ, New York

The session was attended by the representatives of Member States of the

United Nations and representatives of United Nations entities and of ECOSOC accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world.

As decided in the revision of its working methods and programme of work in 2006 (ECOSOC 2006/9), during the 52nd session the Commission considered a priority theme and an emerging issue. In addition, the Commission also reviewed implementation of the agreed conclusions (recommendations) on a theme considered at an earlier session.

To read the Advance unedited versions of CSW52 Agreed Conclusions and Resolutions and other information on the session, please visit <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/52sess.htm>

Preparations for the seventh session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 21 April – 2 May 2008, UNHQ, New York

Pre-registration for Indigenous Peoples Organizations, NGOs and Academic Institutions.

The seventh session of the Permanent Forum will take place from 21 April to 2 May 2008 at United Nations Headquarters, in New York. The special theme of the sixth session will be "Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges". The agenda also places special emphasis on implementation and includes a half-day discussion on Pacific, and a half-day discussion on indigenous languages. Indigenous children and youth, urban indigenous peoples and migration and a discussion on the Second Decade will also be held. Given the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly, the UNPFII is also expected to

focus considerably on its role under the Declaration.

By resolution 2000/22, ECOSOC decided, inter alia, that States, United Nations bodies and organs, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council may participate in the work of the Forum as observers.

SPFII opened a special webpage that provides information on participation of Indigenous Peoples Organizations NGOs, and other interested entities at the seventh session of the Permanent Forum. To read complete information on the seventh session, pre-registration forms, special events, etc., please visit http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_seventh.html

Pre-sessional meeting of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 12 to 14 February 2008, Madrid, Spain

The UNPFII held its Pre-sessional Meeting in Madrid from 12-14 February, hosted by the Government of Spain. The following members of the UNPFII participated at the meeting: Mr. Hassan Id Balkassm, Mr. Michael Dodson, Ms. Liliane Muzangi Mbela, Ms. Qin Xiaomei, Mr. Pavel Sulyandziga, Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Ms. Tonya Frichner, Ms. Elisa Canqui Mollo, Mr. Carsten Smith, Mr. Bartolome Clavero, Ms. Margaret Lokawua, Mr. Carlos Mamani Condori, Mr. Lars Anders Baer.

A welcome statement was made by the Secretary General of AECID, Mr. Juan Pablo de Laiglesia. This was followed by opening statements by Ms. Elsa Stamatopoulou, Chief of the Secretariat of the UNPFII and Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the UNPFII. The Forum expressed its appreciation to the Government of Spain for hosting its pre-sessional meeting for the seventh session.

In preparation of its next session, the Forum discussed an important range of topics:

- its role under its new mandate under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- the rationalization of its agenda, including having one policy year and one year for monitoring
- a staggering system for the reporting by UN agencies, so that each agency will report every three years instead of every year
- the programme of work of the seventh session
- the Bureau of the seventh session
- the need to strengthen the human and financial resources of SPFII
- given the apology issued by the Australian Government to the Aboriginal Peoples, the Forum decided to send a letter to the Government. In addition, the Forum was informed that a representative of the Government will come to the next session of the Forum to declare Australia's support for the Declaration.

The report, agenda and programme of work of the meeting appears in Annex 1.

Inter-Agency Cooperation

Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) meeting looking at articles 41 and 42 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 27 and 28 February 2008, Geneva, Switzerland

Focal points on indigenous issues (about 25 people) shared information on challenges and opportunities for the integration of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN-DECRIPS) in the work of their agencies as well as the relevant governing and policy bodies. Special emphasis was placed on the ways UN country teams could integrate the Declaration—also given the impetus provided by the recently adopted UNDG Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues. SPFII was among the entities that

presented a paper to the IASG on the theme of the IASG meeting.

In addition to initiatives taken and to be taken by individual agencies, IASG decided to create some common actions for the promotion of the Declaration, including an advocacy campaign framework as well as a pilot inter-agency project. At the same time, agencies agreed to start or enhance capacity-building activities on indigenous issues within their organizations. Agencies were encouraged to disseminate the Declaration as widely as possible and assist in the translation of the Declaration into indigenous languages. SPFII agreed to post those on its website—something that will also contribute to the coordination of these efforts.

The report of the IASG has been submitted to the seventh session of the UNPFI

