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The Message Stick¹ highlights the activities undertaken by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) as well as its Secretariat for the period from February 2009 to July 2009. It is produced by SPFII staff with contributions from David Roach and Rowena Medland, who served internships at SPFII during this period.

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.

The Eighth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The Eighth Session of the Permanent Forum took place at UN Headquarters in New York from 18 – 29 May earlier this year, attracting some 1800 participants from civil society, UN agencies, Member States and academia. In addition to the formal meetings, over 60 side events were organized by indigenous peoples' organizations, governments, UN agencies and NGOs.



The eighth session was notable for a number of new methods of work by the Forum, including the practice of alternating sessions from policy recommendations to reviewing recommendations and their implementations. The eighth session marked the first review year, where the Forum focused on the review of recommendations related to indigenous women, economic and social development and the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. This practice of a rotation between policy years and review years is common practice in other UN annual meetings, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development.



The Permanent Forum found that of the 150 recommendations it has issued related to economic and social development over the years, more than half of them are being implemented. A number of the statements, conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Forum under economic and social development focus on corporations, including extractive industries. The Forum heard a statement by the Secretary-General's Special Representative on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises and recommended that states be urged to ensure that such business practices comply with the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A number of recommendations were addressed to corporations and other business enterprises, including for the adoption of policies by them on indigenous issues, in accordance with the Declaration, as well as for access to effective remedies.



The Forum recommended workshops on a) indigenous peoples and health, with special emphasis on reproductive health, and b) on indicators of well-being of indigenous peoples to be used for the implementation and monitoring of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Forum also asked the UN system and states to conduct assessments of the extent of implementation of the Forum's recommendations on women, using the framework of the Declaration and also

recommended a study on the situation of indigenous women migrants.

The Forum also recommended the full participation of indigenous women to the 15th anniversary of Beijing as well as taking indigenous women's issues into account in the new gender architecture reform.

Another change to the agenda was the in-depth dialogue with UN Agencies, where six UN Agencies presented their work related to indigenous issues and participated in a dialogue with the Forum members and observers from member states and indigenous peoples' organizations. The six agencies were the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The results of the in-depth dialogue will be issued as a separate official document in all official UN languages later this year.

As in previous years, the Forum devoted a half day discussion on a specific region. This year, the focus was on the Arctic. The Forum adopted a comprehensive statement on indigenous peoples and the Arctic, highlighting the effects of climate change, and also worrisome trends related to health, education and culture in Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland. The Forum welcomed a number of positive institutional developments, namely in Greenland and Norway. The Forum urged states to provide financial resources to Arctic communities to develop their cultures and to adapt to climate change. The Forum also noted the harm that the recent decision of the European Parliament regarding the seal import ban may cause Inuit in the Arctic and called on the EU to rescind this import ban.



The Forum nominated three of its members to prepare studies. Lars Anders Baer will undertake a study on the impact of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures on reindeer herding. Carsten Smith and Michael Dodson will undertake a study about indigenous fishing rights in the seas. Their findings will be presented at the 9th Session of the Permanent Forum in April 2010.

Following up the work that took place at the Expert Group Meeting earlier in 2009 on Article 42 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Forum elaborated its understanding of this article in general comments which are contained in an Annex to the Report of the Eighth Session of the Permanent Forum.

Article 42 states that “The United Nations, its bodies, including the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and specialized agencies, including at the country level, and States shall promote respect for and full application of the provisions of this Declaration and follow up the effectiveness of this Declaration.”

The Permanent Forum takes this new mandate very seriously and it has looked to the UN system for models on how this mandate is to be carried out. Although the Forum has yet to develop clear methods of work, the general comments in the Report of the Forum point to the possibility of conducting dialogues between the Permanent Forum and Governments regarding the application of the declaration and the follow-up on its effectiveness.

Next year’s special theme (a policy year) will be on “indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity”.

Indigenous Women: The Permanent Forum reviews progress on recommendations

At its eighth session the Permanent Forum reviewed the implementation of relevant recommendations issued by the Permanent Forum throughout the course of its previous sessions.

Over the past seven years, recommendations made by the Permanent Forum regarding indigenous women have been addressed to States, UN agencies and bodies, indigenous peoples and civil society. Recommendations have reflected a large range of issues, including; education, culture, health, human rights, environment, development, conflict and political participation.



During the eighth session, a number of indigenous women’s organizations, including the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI), a network of Indigenous women leaders and organizations, convened side events to discuss the implementation of recommendations made during the past seven sessions as related to indigenous women.



At one such event, FIMI presented a report titled “Analysis and Follow Up of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Recommendations Related to Indigenous Women.”² The report outlines the recommendations adopted by the Permanent Forum during its seven sessions, presents a set of indicators to facilitate its monitoring, highlights advancements, identifies challenges and offers final recommendations. At the side event, panelists and participants agreed that the Permanent Forum has the possibility to play a key role in the integration of a gender perspective in its recommendations by mainstreaming specific issues, establishing mechanisms of participation and effective communication, planning a periodic evaluation of the implementation status of recommendations and supporting the elaboration of indicators for monitoring.



Earlier in the year, the analysis report that was prepared by the Secretariat assessed the implementation of the recommendations on the basis of reports submitted by UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations and States. It is noted that one of the key factors that contributed to the implementation of recommendations is the work of the Inter-Agency Support Group, a group of 30 agency members who share information and meet to

² The FIMI report is available online as Conference Room Paper no. 15 (CRP. 15) from the eighth session, at http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_eighth.html

strategize, cooperate and coordinate their activities.

At the side event organized by FIMI, it was also agreed by panelists and participants that United Nations agencies should take a step further than the already established Inter-Agency Support Group and develop interagency groups at the country level to coordinate actions and develop joint-programming, especially targeting Indigenous peoples and Indigenous women. Such country level interagency groups should also strengthen the capacity of the country-based Resident Coordinator office, especially with regard to relevant issues for Indigenous peoples including: interculturality; development with identity; free, prior and informed consent; self-determination, as well as international standards and principles.

On the review of indigenous women, the Permanent Forum made a number of follow-up recommendations. Continuing on from the observations made by both the Secretariat and the panelists and participants at the side event hosted by IIWF/FIMI, the Permanent Forum recommended that the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples issues' convene an international technical expert seminar on indicators of the well-being of indigenous peoples and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Further, the Forum recommended that relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, States and indigenous peoples conduct assessments of the extent to which they have advanced the recommendations of the Forum on indigenous women, utilizing the framework of the Declaration as set out in the report provided by IIWF/FIMI. The Forum has called for immediate implementation of these recommendations.



Health Related Issues at the Eighth Session

Several health-related side events were convened at the eighth session. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO) organized a well-received event entitled Cultural Indicators for Food Sovereignty and Sustainable development, which discussed important cross-cutting issues of indigenous health: food security, development, and sovereignty. The Blood Tribe Department of Health organized another important event entitled Indigenous Peoples Wellness Management System -- Modern Traditionalism and a Return to Real Health. Kim Barker of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada made the following remarks about their event entitled Our Children Our Future, A Global Indigenous Peoples Initiative to Stop TB: “Our side event was to review the burden of tuberculosis in indigenous populations globally. We have engaged the UNPFII for over a year and have hosted the permanent forum members at a forum in Toronto last November to develop a strategy that could be used by countries in collaboration with their indigenous peoples to deal with the heavy burden of TB in many indigenous communities. We reviewed the strategic plan at our side event and reviewed the recommendation that the UNPFII become a partner to the Stop TB Partnership of the WHO.”

Following the success of the 8th Session side events, as well as the efforts of indigenous delegates and the secretariat, the Permanent Forum welcomed the global Stop TB Partnership, which is housed within the World Health Organization. The Permanent Forum urged “...the Partnership to ensure that indigenous peoples’ concerns are fully included and that they participate in the decision-making body in implementing programmes and projects.”³

³ E/2009/43 Para 69.

Nominations of Permanent Forum Members

The current membership of the Permanent Forum is due to expire at the end of 2010. In early July, a call for nominations was sent out for the three-year period from January 2011 until December 2013. Current members who have served the maximum of two terms (6 years) as Permanent Forums members cannot be nominated for a further term.



It has been the understanding of the indigenous caucus that the eight indigenous nominated members should be from the seven socio-cultural regions determined to give broad representation to the world’s indigenous peoples. The regions are: Africa; Asia; Central and South America and the Caribbean; the Arctic; Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia; North America; and the Pacific. The eighth member would be nominated from one of the three largest indigenous populated regions (Latin America, Asia and Africa) which would be rotated every three years. Following this rotation, Latin America will have an extra member for the next term (2011 – 2013).

Only nominations from indigenous peoples’ organizations are accepted. Individuals cannot nominate themselves. It is highly advisable that nominations are only submitted once a thorough consultation process has taken place throughout the region.

The deadline for submission of nominations is 1 February 2010.

For more information go the UNPFII Members page:
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/members.html>

International expert group meeting on extractive industries, Indigenous Peoples' rights and corporate social responsibility

In addressing the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other UN fora, Indigenous Peoples have consistently expressed the crucial need to address human rights issues related to extractive industries. Responding to the continuing call for indigenous representatives from affected communities to come together to share their experiences and to strategize on how to address common problems, during its Seventh Session, the Permanent Forum adopted a recommendation for holding an expert workshop on extractive industries. The International Expert Group Workshop was organized by Tebtebba Foundation in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and was held from 27 to 29 March 2009 in Manila, Philippines.

The meeting was attended by indigenous experts from the seven indigenous socio-cultural regions; members of the Permanent Forum; a member of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; representatives of departments, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations systems; representatives of other intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor and academic institutions; and representatives

of Member States.

During the meeting, participants were asked to outline approaches to improving the protection of the human rights of indigenous peoples in relation to extractive industries. Specifically, participants were requested to consider the following discussion points and make recommendations regarding each:

- a) The role of corporations, including how the UN Declaration can be used to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples with regard to extractive industries.
- b) The role of indigenous nations, including how indigenous peoples can work to ensure better protection and respect of indigenous peoples' rights.
- c) The role of States, including how States can improve environmental and social regulation of extractive industries.
- d) The role of the UN and the International Financial Institutions, including how the International Financial Institutions can promote the rights of indigenous peoples in relation to extractive industries.
- e) Ongoing work, including how the participants in the international conference of indigenous peoples and the international expert group workshop could work together to ensure the implementation of the recommendations that emerged from both meetings.

Following discussions, participants made recommendations on these topics, emphasizing in particular respect for the rights enshrined in the UN Declaration, including land rights and the right to free, prior and informed consent; the need for accountability and redress for ongoing and past abuses; and for the establishment of a new international mechanism or process to focus specifically on



the issue of the human rights of indigenous peoples in relation to extractive industries.

The report of the workshop was presented as a conference room paper to the Eighth Session of the Permanent Forum and is available on the website of the Permanent Forum at:

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

Prior to the international expert group meeting, an International Conference on Extractive Industries and Indigenous Peoples was held from 23-25 March 2009. This was attended by representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations and nations, NGOs, donor community, and some members of academe from 35 countries. This conference discussed links between the global economic crisis, climate change, extractive industries, and the experiences of Indigenous Peoples from all over the world. A global network on Indigenous Peoples and extractive industries was established by the conference, which also agreed upon on the Manila Declaration of the International Conference on Extractive Industries and Indigenous Peoples, which was formally submitted to the Expert Group Workshop and which is available on the website of Tebtebba at:

http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=57

Chaco Mission: UNPFII visit to Bolivia and Paraguay

The Governments of Paraguay and Bolivia invited the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues undertake a mission to the Chaco region of Paraguay and Bolivia in April and May 2009. The purpose of the mission, which was supported by staff from FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNDESA and UNDP, was to address the situation of indigenous peoples of the Chaco region who are living in

situations of forced labor. The mission, which was the first of its kind for the Permanent Forum, also sought to encourage effective cooperation at the country-level among all actors, including the Governments, UN agencies and indigenous peoples' organizations, for the speedy elimination of forced labor practices.

The objectives of the mission were:

- a) To engage in dialogue at legislative, political, policy and practice levels with Bolivian and Paraguayan Government ministries to take stock of their efforts to combat slavery-like practices in the Chaco regions of each country.
- b) To visit and consult with indigenous communities and organizations in Bolivia and Paraguay to learn about their efforts to address labor abuses against Guaraní peoples.
- c) To consult with UN country teams in Bolivia and Paraguay to assess the state of UN involvement and action in addressing the situation of the Guaraní in each country.
- d) To assess challenges faced by each Government, by indigenous communities and activists and by UN country teams regarding the situation of the Guaraní.
- e) To identify collaborative ways among all concerned for strengthening action to eliminate slavery practices affecting the Guaraní.

On Thursday, May 28, 2009, in a plenary session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issue attended by indigenous participants from around the world, States, UN agencies, NGOs and other civil society organizations, participating Permanent Forum members presented recommendations based on the mission. The recommendations focused on steps that can be taken by the Governments of Bolivia and Paraguay, indigenous peoples'



organizations and the UN system to eliminate forced labor. A full report, including the findings of the mission, is being completed and will be available on the website of the Permanent Forum.

Training Workshops: UN Country teams working with indigenous peoples

The Secretariat of the Permanent Forum produced a training module on Indigenous Peoples' Issues earlier this year, which was field tested with the Nepal UN Country Team in February. The Training Module is a direct result of the UN Development Group (UNDG) Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues which came into force as of 1 February 2008. It is considered to be a crucial tool in the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

SPFII prepared this training of trainers course in close collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO, which also hosted the course on 8-11 June in Turin. The course included a substantive component on indigenous peoples' issues, as well as a strong training methodology component.

Seventeen trainers were prepared at the training of trainers, including indigenous experts and UN agency staff. The course covered both substantive and methodological issues. The trainers came from all regions in order to ensure that they can be easily and efficiently deployed to UN Country Teams.

The trainers will work with UN Country Teams, as well as governments and indigenous peoples, over 2009-2010 and beyond to raise awareness of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and facilitate the implementation of

the UNDG Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues.

So far, the Secretariat has received requests from the UN Country Teams of Ecuador and the Philippines, and training workshops are being scheduled for them. There will also be a one day workshop for staff working at headquarters in the fall.

Mid-term assessment of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

During the session of the General Assembly in December 2008 it was decided to call for a mid-term assessment of the Second Decade. The Secretary General, in consultation with Member States, relevant United Nations agencies and mechanisms, and other stakeholders including indigenous peoples' organizations, are to submit a mid-term assessment report to the General Assembly at its Sixty-Fifth Session, which evaluates progress made in the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Second Decade.



During June – August 2009 the research will be conducted and a questionnaire will be circulated to all involved parties. The Secretariat of the Permanent, which is focal point for the mid-term – assessment of the Decade, encourages all involved parties to



actively engage in the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the Decade and promote a broad and participatory process.

Members States and UN agencies have received a questionnaire, so as to provide information on the degree of implementation on the Second Decade from their perspective. Indigenous peoples' organizations and other civil society organizations are encouraged to download a questionnaire and guidelines from the homepage of the UNSPFII, so as to enrich the report of the General Secretary with their analysis and information from indigenous peoples' perspective on the Second Decade.

The Secretariat of the Permanent Forum

The Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the General Assembly in 2002. It is based at UN Headquarters in New York in the Division for Social Policy and Development of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DSPD/DESA)

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Comings and goings

Juan Fernando Nunez and Sandrine Cardon recently left SPFII to pursue other work at the United Nations, while Talei Cama has recently joined the Secretariat. SPFII wishes Juan Fernando and Sandrine the best in their new duties, while we thank them for their work. We also welcome Talei to the Secretariat and look forward to working with her.

Vacancy Announcement at SPFII

A vacancy announcement has been issued for a P-4 position at the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at UN Headquarters in New York City. The deadline for submissions is 21 September 2009.

The vacancy announcement number is: 09-SOC-DESA-421576-R-NEW YORK (G)

A detailed description of responsibilities, requirements and instructions on how to apply can be found on "Galaxy" the UN Human Resources site.

<http://myun.un.org/Galaxy/Release3/vacancy/vacancy.aspx?lang=1200>

The vacancy is under the Social Affairs Occupational Group.

Please note that applications SHOULD NOT be sent to the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Applicants should follow the "How to apply" instructions on the vacancy announcement page.

