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Press Release HR/4850

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Fourth Session
15th & 16th Meetings (AM & PM)

CONCLUDING FOURTH SESSION, PERMANENT FORUM RECOMMENDS THAT STATES ENSURE INDIGENOUS

PARTICIPATION IN DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION OF POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Also Recommends That Anti-Poverty Strategies Clearly Identify Rights to Indigenous Land, Forest, Marine Resources

Expressing concern that some Millennium Development Goal processes may lead to accelerated loss of indigenous lands and natural resources, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues today recommended that States, the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations ensure that indigenous peoples participate in designing, implementing and monitoring poverty reduction strategies, in one of seven sets of draft recommendations and three draft decisions the Forum approved by consensus today at the close of its fourth session.

In a text focusing on the session's Millennium Goal theme of eradicating poverty and hunger (document E/C.19/2005/L.2), approved as orally amended, the Forum recommended that poverty reduction strategy papers clearly identify rights to indigenous land, forest, marine and other natural resources; specify the role of indigenous peoples; and acknowledge their control over land, forest, and natural resources. States should also recognize indigenous rights to food security and the sustainable production and consumption of healthy and nutritious foods by using appropriate sustainable technology.

By the same text, the Forum recommended that immediate steps be taken within the framework of the Commission on Sustainable Development to protect water from privatization, bilateral and multilateral governmental agreements and other incursions that affect the integrity of waters and impoverish communities, particularly indigenous women. In addition, it recommended that the Commission appoint a special rapporteur for water protection to gather testimony directly from indigenous communities affected or targeted for water privatization, diversion, toxic contamination, pollution, commodification or other environmental injustices that damage natural and potable water supplies.

Addressing the session's Millennium Goal theme on achieving universal primary education (document E/C.19/2005/L.3), approved as orally amended, the Forum recommended that States endorse intercultural education as a national policy priority, and review current national curricula and textbooks to erase culturally discriminatory materials and enhance knowledge of indigenous cultures. States should also ensure that indigenous children have access to free primary quality education, and develop bilingual and culturally appropriate education for them to reduce dropout rates.

Also by that text, the Forum urged the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to become actively involved in the Fifth World Indigenous Education Conference

later this year in New Zealand. It also urged indigenous communities and organizations to establish effective arrangements for the participation of indigenous parents and community members in decision-making regarding education services for their children.

According to another orally amended text on its future work (document E/C.19/2005/L.6), the Forum recommended that its Bureau would serve as the advisory group to the Voluntary Fund for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, and called on governments, intergovernmental organizations, foundations and non-governmental organizations to give generously to the Fund. It also decided to organize a special day of discussion on the Second Decade's Programme of Action during its fifth session, and invite the Coordinator of the Decade and the Secretariat's Department of Public Information to initiate the Second Decade's awareness-raising campaign.

Three of the remaining sets of draft recommendations, approved as orally amended, related to human rights, indigenous women and data collection (documents E/C.19/2005/L.5,9 and 10), while the fourth, approved as written, focused on indigenous children and youth (documents E/C.19/2005/L.7). All draft recommendations and decisions will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for adoption.

Of the three draft decisions approved by the Forum, the first (document E/C.19/2005/L.11), as orally amended, would have ECOSOC decide to authorize a three-day international expert group meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, indigenous participation and good governance.

By the second draft decision (document E/C.19/2005/L.12), ECOSOC would decide that the body's fifth session would be held in New York from 15 to 26 May 2006.

A third draft decision would have ECOSOC approve the Forum's provisional agenda and documentation for the fifth session (document E/C.19/2004/L.4), as orally amended, which will focus on the special theme "the Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples: redefining the Goals".

Also today, the Forum adopted its draft report (document E/C.19/2005/L.13), as orally amended, which was introduced by Rapporteur Michael Dodson.

In closing remarks, Forum Chairperson Victoria Tauli-Corpuz noted that recommendations adopted under its Millennium Goal theme of eradicating poverty and hunger would have significant impacts on the lives of indigenous peoples, if implemented. She added, however, that strong and creative partnerships between indigenous peoples, governments and the United Nations system, and a human rights-based framework for development, would be needed to significantly change the indigenous poverty situation.

As for the Millennium Goal theme on universal primary education, several recommendations were aimed at ensuring that education would not be used to assimilate indigenous peoples into mainstream society, further undermining their identities, cultures and traditional knowledge, she said. Bilingual and intercultural education for both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples were vital in sustaining cultural diversity, as was the promotion of appropriate and relevant education for indigenous children.

The session had also come up with concrete proposals on data disaggregation, free, prior and informed consent (on projects concerning indigenous peoples), and indigenous women, children and youth, she said. It had further underscored the need to implement human rights instruments, and adopt the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within the next two years. Finally, it had discussed how the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous People should be shaped and finalized, and had innovated new working methods, such as appointing Forum experts as special rapporteurs on various themes and issues.

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, José Antonio Ocampo, also made closing remarks.

The session closed with ceremonial groups singing several traditional chants on such themes as protection, inspiration and unity.

This year's Bureau consisted of Ms. Tauli-Corpuz (Igorot, Philippines) as Chairperson; Hassan Id Balkassm (Amazigh, Morocco), Otilia Lux de Coti (Maya, Guatemala), Ida Nicolaisen (Denmark) and Pavel Sulyandziga (Udege, Russian Federation) as Vice-Chairpersons; and Michael Dodson (Yawuru, Australia) as Rapporteur. For additional information on the Forum, see Press Release HR/4836 of 13 May.

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