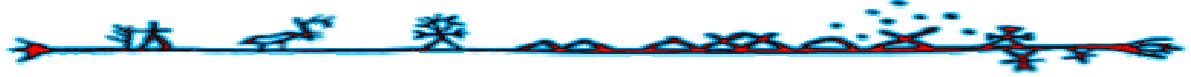


*Message of the Chairperson of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on the occasion of the International Day of The World's Indigenous Peoples, 9 August 2003*



*It is a privilege to celebrate this special Day for all indigenous peoples of the world . The recognition that indigenous peoples have achieved today at the international level has been in the hearts and dreams of our ancestors who were here long before us. Indeed we walk in the footprints of the indigenous leaders who came to assert our rightful place within this family of nations. It is because of their efforts and the growth of support from friends throughout the globe over time that we celebrate this Day. Our vision is to prepare the way for our children, who will come and take their rightful place to lead their generation and generations to come. And the United Nations has been the unique Organization to heed this vision.*

*Since the time the Haudenosaunee Chief Deskahe in 1923 and the Maori Chief Ratana in 1924 came to plead their cause at the League of Nations, there has been no hesitation amongst the leadership of indigenous peoples to guide their people in a world that has been changing at a phenomenal rate. Indigenous peoples are peoples with the same rights as other peoples, we represent the cultural diversity of the globe and focus on the relation between ecological and cultural diversity.*

*We deplore and condemn the egregious violations of human rights, including extrajudicial killings and involuntary disappearances, the discrimination in the criminal justice system, the forced displacement, the extreme poverty, the danger of extinction of isolated indigenous communities, the continuing threat to indigenous cultures and indigenous lands that indigenous peoples still suffer. But now that indigenous peoples have a place within the family of nations we look forward to a real and constructive partnership with States and intergovernmental organizations. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is a vehicle that will allow us to gain a higher profile and come closer to the end of exclusion and discrimination and have our human rights respected.*

*With the First and Second Sessions of the Permanent Forum behind us and the establishment of the Permanent Forum's Secretariat at United Nations Headquarters, I am pleased with the substantial progress that has been made towards initiating the integration of indigenous issues within the system of the United Nations. We look forward to working closely with UN agencies, funds and programmes to strengthen the pace of change in international and national policies. We also look forward to progressive discussions and dialogue with Member States to that end so that the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals also benefit the lives of the more than 370 million indigenous people on this planet.*

*We, indigenous peoples, must continue to enjoy our cultures, sing our songs, speak our languages and take care of our lands. In dignity and justice we strive to raise our children and grand children in our cultural ways so that they may prosper and prepare the paths for our future generations.*