

DPA's input to the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

1. DPA has identified the coordination and exchange of information with other parts of the UN system working on indigenous issues as central to its analytical work. During the last couple of years, the Americas Division established the practice of meeting regularly with the former Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People, Mr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, and looks forward to continue this working relationship with the new Rapporteur, Mr. James Anaya. DPA is also planning to meet with the Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues during the next UNPFII session.
2. A representative of DPA-Americas Division participated in a workshop on "Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights: Rights to Lands and Territories", held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 5-7 December 2008. The workshop gathered indigenous representatives from South America and legal experts to discuss the current situation of indigenous movements, in particular regarding indigenous land issues. Special mention was made of conflicts rooted in the actions of extractive industries and the establishment of protected areas within indigenous territories. The workshop was a unique opportunity to establish regular links with indigenous organizations from the region.
3. Last October in Bolivia, after several weeks of dialogue, pro-Government lawmakers and the opposition reached an agreement on the revision of the draft constitution and the process for its approval. The parties agreed to hold a referendum on the new Constitution on 25 January 2009, followed by general elections in December 2009. Per invitation of the parties, the UN, the Organization of American States (OAS), European Union (EU), UNASUR and the Catholic and Protestant Churches witnessed the above-mentioned dialogue. DPA/Americas supported the UN Resident Coordinator, who represented the UN during the dialogue. The new Constitution, which was approved on 25 January 2009, includes a series of dispositions for the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
4. In line with resolution 1740 (2007), the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) provided technical support to the Constitutional Assembly election held in April 2008. UNMIN's Electoral Assistance Office supported the Electoral Commission of Nepal in various areas, among them, the provision of legal advice on the electoral law, including quotas to ensure the representation of women and minorities, which required the political parties to nominate minority candidates from certain communities in the party list proportional to their number in the census. UNMIN also assisted in the development of nomination and selection procedures to enable political parties to meet the required quotas. This resulted in the highest number of marginalised groups, including indigenous communities, ever represented in an elected body in Nepal.