



Press Release HR/4849

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Fourth Session
14th Meeting (PM)

PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES DISCUSSES FUTURE WORK,

SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE, AGENDA FOR FIFTH SESSION

The fourth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues this afternoon continued consideration of its future work and of the newly inaugurated Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, and discussed the provisional agenda for the Forum's fifth session.

The representative of Argentina, speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that in meeting the challenges ahead in ensuring the rights and full development of indigenous peoples in the Latin American hemisphere, the Rio Group distinguished two areas of action. Internally, it was necessary to raise awareness about the specific problems of indigenous populations in areas such as human rights, health care, education and development. At the international level, the Group had co-sponsored the General Assembly resolution calling for the Second Decade, among other things, with an agenda related to the Millennium Development Goals. He advocated the prompt adoption of the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and recommended that the Forum hold dialogues with interested Governments, to enhance the visibility and understanding of the problems of indigenous peoples.

Concurring with that statement, the representative of Cuba also stressed the importance of international cooperation at all levels, including South-South cooperation, to achieve an international agenda focusing on all development goals, which should take into account the cultures and traditional values of indigenous peoples.

A representative of the Hawaiian Institute for Human Rights recommended, among other things, that indigenous peoples have their own United Nations ambassador; that a mechanism be set up to monitor activities for maintaining peace; and that the Forum support an international summit focusing on indigenous peoples.

The representative of Coordinador de Comunidades Quichuas de la Amazonia de Ecuador recommended that the next item for the Forum's in-depth discussion should be lands and treaties of indigenous peoples.

The Council of All Earth's representative recommended that the Forum convene a seminar to determine the relevant activities for the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous People and to identify activities at the international level carried out by indigenous peoples.

Responding to a statement made yesterday by Adat Alifuru on the situation in the Maluku province of Indonesia, that country's representative said the fabrication was political propaganda that could have a negative effect on the reconciliation process. If there was a sincere concern to improve welfare, his

Government would be willing to enter into a dialogue. The success of ongoing reconstruction in Maluku depended on commitments from both the Government and the people in the province.

The representative of Thailand stated that references in yesterday's statement of the Akha Heritage Foundation regarding the Akha's farmland were untrue. Land in the Mae Fah Luang District was inhabited by over 80,000 hilltribe people, including the Akha, who had traditionally worked at slash-and-burn farming, growing opium, and forest encroachment, which had resulted in massive deforestation.

Agricultural development projects had been set up to revitalize the ecological system and promote economic opportunities for hilltribe people. The people understood the project and cooperated fully with the Government.

According to the provisional agenda for the Forum's fifth session (document E/C.19/2005/L.4), the session's special theme would be: "The Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples: redefining the Goals"; the sub-items would be: "Millennium Development Goals development and consultation; and cross-cutting approaches to the implementation and monitoring of the Goals.

The provisional agenda also includes the item "Ongoing priorities and themes": human rights; indigenous children and youth; data collection; free, prior and informed consent; international expert meeting; half-day discussion on Africa; and the recently inaugurated Second International Decade Of the World's Indigenous People.

Bringing together some 1,500 indigenous leaders, activists and representatives, this year's Forum is focusing on indigenous peoples and the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education. (For additional information on the Forum, see Press Release HR/4836 of 13 May.)

The Permanent Forum will meet again at 10 a.m. tomorrow, 27 May, to conclude its fourth session.

* * * * *