



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INDIGENOUS VOICES

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CLIMATE CHANGE, BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND LIVELIHOODS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TO BE FOCUS OF UN FORUM

Other key issues include indigenous languages and indigenous peoples in the Pacific region

(New York, 16 April 2008) More than 2,500 indigenous participants from all regions of the world, including Bolivia's President H.E. Evo Morales Ayma, will converge on the United Nations Headquarters next week to engage with the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, State representatives, senior UN officials, civil society and academia to state their views, voice their concerns about the effects of climate change on indigenous peoples and to discuss the role they may play in combating climate change.

The Seventh Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will be held in New York from 21 April to 2 May.

Indigenous peoples are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, owing to their dependence upon, and close relationship with the environment and its resources. Climate change exacerbates the difficulties already faced by indigenous communities, including political and economic marginalization, loss of land and resources, human rights violations, discrimination and unemployment.

Although they contribute very little to the underlying causes of climate change, indigenous peoples are helping enhance the resilience of ecosystems they inhabit and are interpreting and reacting to the impacts of climate change in creative ways, drawing on traditional knowledge and other technologies to find solutions which may help society at large to cope with impending changes.

This year's session is the first since world leaders adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in September 2007. The landmark Declaration, drafted and debated for more than 20 years, emphasizes the rights of indigenous peoples to live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their self-determined development, in keeping with their own needs and aspirations.

Other issues to be discussed during the two-week session include: indigenous peoples in the Pacific region, the Millennium Development Goals, indigenous languages, and human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples. The outcome of the seventh session is expected to be a report to UN's Economic and Social Council, including draft decisions recommended for adoption by the Council.

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United Nations



Indigenous peoples at the international level

Estimates point to more than 370 million indigenous peoples in some 90 countries worldwide. While they are from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, they share challenges such as: lack of basic healthcare; limited access to education; loss of control over land; abject poverty; displacement; human rights violations; discrimination and economic and social marginalization.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2000. The Forum provides expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the UN system through the Council; raises awareness and promotes the integration and coordination of relevant activities within the UN system; and disseminates information on indigenous issues.

The Permanent Forum is comprised of sixteen independent experts, functioning in their personal capacity. The Economic and Social Council appoints the members, eight of whom are nominated by governments and eight nominated by indigenous organizations in their regions.

The United Nations and climate change

United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon has consistently stated that climate change is a major global challenge. Since taking office in 2007, he has taken a leadership role in supporting efforts by the international community to address the problem by bringing world leaders together and by ensuring that all parts of the UN system contribute to the solution. As a global forum with universal participation, the United Nations is uniquely positioned to forge a common approach to combating climate change.

The recent reports of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasize that the science on climate change is very clear -- the warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and that this is happening because of human activities. The IPCC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, along with Al Gore, for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change.

World leaders attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007 agreed that addressing climate change effectively requires mitigation, adaptation, new technology and financing.

An indigenous exhibit to coincide with the session will be inaugurated at 6.15 p.m. on 22 April in the Visitor's Lobby of the United Nations.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

- ❖ **A press conference** with Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; Ms. Myrna Cunningham, Director of the Center for Indigenous People's Autonomy and Development (Nicaragua); Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity; and Mr. Fiu Elisara, Executive Director of O le Siosiomaga Society Inc. (Samoa) will take place on **Monday, 21 April, at 1:15 p.m.** at UN Headquarters, Room S-226.
- ❖ **A press conference with H.E. Evo Morales Ayma** will take place on Monday, 21 April, 2 p.m. at UN Headquarters, Room S-226.
- ❖ **For interviews with UN officials and indigenous leaders**, please contact: Nancy Groves, Department of Public Information, tel: 917-367-7083, e-mail: mediainfo@un.org
- ❖ **For Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues**, please contact: Mirian Masaquiza, Secretariat of UNPFII, tel: 917-367-6006, e-mail: IndigenousPermanentForum@un.org
- ❖ **For more information on the Seventh Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**, please see: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_seventh.html
- ❖ **For more information on the UN System's work on climate change**, please see: <http://www.un.org/climatechange/index.shtml>

