

Greetings,

This is the statement made by the Indigenous Peoples Major Group at the opening of the multi-stakeholder dialogue session of the general plenary session of the UN Prep Com II for the Johannesburg Summit 2002. This was a brief statement meant to open up discussion for multi-stakeholders (NGOs) and countries.

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**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' PRESENTATION TO THE FIRST PLENARY SESSION OF
THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE AT THE 2ND PREPCOM OF THE WORLD
SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Tuesday, 29 January 2002

New York City, New York - USA

Presentation by Indigenous representatives, selected by the Indigenous Caucus.

Presentation and introduction of issues by Tom Goldtooth, International Indian Treaty Council and Director of Indigenous Environmental Network, USA

It is in respect of all those that have gone on, those that are here now, and the future generation yet unborn that I make this presentation. It is also in respect of the sacredness of our Mother Earth that I speak.

I will highlight today under the key messages which we, indigenous peoples, would like to convey to the government and other multi-stakeholders. The elaboration of these points are contained in our Dialogue Paper (E/CN.17/2002/PC.2/6/Add.3). I hope you all had a chance to read through this document.

This is a summary of a Dialogue Paper, which is a working document that will embrace the mind, heart and spirit of indigenous peoples as a major group as we further develop our agenda for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The indigenous peoples Dialogue Paper embraces key principles and issues consistent with those issues expressed by the Secretary General's report.

One key principle reflected in the concerns and inspiration of indigenous peoples, concerning achieving sustainable development within Indigenous communities, traditional lands and territories,

is the principle of Indigenous peoples right of self-determination. Indigenous peoples' rights have assumed an important place in international human rights law.

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising our right to development. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of our lands, territories and other resources. These principles respect the recognition of indigenous communities and institutions worldwide that have been redefining our understanding of western approaches of "development." Western forms of development have not been sustainable and, instead, have been a disruption to our cultural practices, environmental degradation of traditional lands, biodiversity and the bodies of our mothers and families. Development, as it has been practiced within our communities and territories has been a major factor that continues to create poverty and foster dependency on developmental and financial systems that don't recognize Indigenous traditional knowledge and values.

Presentation by Victoria Tauli Corpuz, Tetebba, Philippines

Ten years after Rio, a significant number of indigenous peoples still live in sustainable societies, historically evolved in diverse ecosystems. The ethics, values and cultures which are essential in sustaining such societies are still very much lived by many of us. However, since colonization up to the present, these diverse societies, ecosystems, cultures and peoples are under serious threats of destruction and extinction. The imposition of the mainstream development model since the 50's has destroyed many of these communities. Now we are again confronted with globalization, which is pushing for a globalized market economy. The loss of our lands, waters, forests, natural resources, cultures and knowledge has accelerated because of the liberalization of trade and investment laws, the privatization of public goods and services such as water, energy, and the absence of laws which protect our rights as indigenous peoples.

When our fate is left to the logic of the market and no protection of our rights as distinct peoples is provided by States and the international community, then whom can we turn to? In the past ten years we relied mainly on ourselves and communities to build our own movements at all levels to assert our right to define how economic, social and cultural development should take place in our communities. We created transnational partnerships between ourselves to collectively struggle for the adoption of international standards which will protect our rights. We have not won this yet because the UN has not adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This for us is a key failure of the ten years after Rio. Many of our colleagues are in Geneva now attending the Working Group on the Draft Declaration and we are hoping that the States would adopt most of the articles in the Declaration.

The health situation of our peoples, both physical and psychological, is also fast deteriorating because of many factors, some of which are increasing poverty, pollution due to organic persistent pollutants, effects of climate change, loss of control over our lands, food insecurity, and the imposition of an alienating western culture. Poverty statistics in most countries and even in international bodies are not disaggregated for indigenous peoples. Thus we cannot see a clear picture of the real poverty situation. There is a need to disaggregate the statistics and also to allow indigenous peoples to define the indicators for poverty which are more appropriate and relevant for their context.

We have successes in several areas such as the inclusion of indigenous peoples as a major group in Agenda 21, the establishment of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the adoption policy papers on indigenous peoples by UN bodies like the UNDP, and better participation of indigenous

peoples in the CBD, particularly the Working Group on Article 8j. At the national levels, there are a few countries, such as the Philippines, Finland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and some countries in Latin America, which have adopted national laws to protect the rights of indigenous peoples. The principle of prior and informed consent which is a crucial aspect of the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination has emerged as a standard to be applied in protecting and promoting indigenous peoples rights in the development process.

However, it is one thing to have these bodies, policies and laws in place. How these are being implemented and monitored is another matter. Many indigenous peoples are saying that even if these are laws in place their poverty situation is still in a very dismal state. There is an upsurge of conflicts over lands and resources.

There are also success stories in ancestral land delineation in several countries which allowed indigenous peoples to have control over the use and development of such lands. It is worthwhile looking into how these have succeeded and to share these stories with others. Because of our continuing struggles to defend our lands and the continued use of our indigenous sustainable resource management systems a few of these lands and practices are still left intact. These practices and the overall philosophy and concept which underpin these must be understood by the broader society. Much more remains to be done in terms of having governments and the international community integrate these practices into their development thinking and strategies.

These few successes have been achieved because of the partnerships between ourselves, between us and some NGOs who are advocates of indigenous peoples rights, some governments, and international bodies like the UN. We still have a long way to go in making these partnerships more equal and we look at these multi-stakeholder dialogues as important steps towards this.

Our spirituality, diverse cultures and knowledge has allowed us to sustain our communities even in the face of adverse developments. I would like to end by quoting again what Chief Oren Lyons said: *“Indigenous peoples have something to offer in this equation for survival. We have common goals and responsibilities, and I say, that you, leaders of this great hope of the world’s people, the United Nations, you should be working with us and not against us for peace. We submit to you that as long as you make war against Etenoha, Mother Earth, there can never be peace. And may I add there can never be sustainable development.”*

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