

**MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE  
WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF MAJOR GROUPS**

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES STATEMENT  
May 15, 2008**

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates,

1. Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately represented among the rural poor and those suffering extreme poverty, through historical and continuing colonisation and discrimination. Being closely linked to lands, forests, waters and ice, indigenous communities are highly vulnerable to climate change. And yet our lands contribute significantly to biodiversity health and climate resilience, even while continuously mined as resources for the dominant economies.
2. Indigenous Peoples are alarmed that proposed climate mitigation and adaptation measures pose serious threats for our peoples.
3. Unlike the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Convention on Biological Diversity, where Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities have a voice, we are excluded from UNFCCC talks and decision-making, and where traditional knowledge for climate prediction and adaptation are virtually ignored.
4. Whilst governments discuss increasing land security and local empowerment in the CSD and CBD, the same governments are ushering in the biggest land-grabs in recent history in the guise of agro-fuels and carbon sequestration, notably the current proposals for Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), under the UNFCCC.
5. These issues were discussed as the central theme of the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Un Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which put forward a number of pertinent recommendations.
6. Agro-fuel plantations are displacing indigenous communities in many countries. And REDD proposals as currently designed will increase centralised control over customary forests and livelihoods, and reward forest destroyers, rather than our stewardship of these lands. The dominant economic model clearly rewards growth (including avoided reduced growth) over conservation and customary sustainable use.

7. Recent discussions among Indigenous Peoples on Self-determined Development, or “Development with Identity” conceive of diverse but inter-linked economic, political and social spheres: the indigenous and local sphere, the inter-cultural sphere, and the mainstream and dominant system.
8. Concretely, Indigenous Peoples propose respect and protection for indigenous lands and customary livelihoods, promoting mutually beneficial inter-cultural ventures – eg eco-tourism, and strong regulation of the economic investment and business, to deliver sustainable development for our communities.
9. Global enabling frameworks, national policy reform, as well as attention to the detailed requirements at the local level are needed. The implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and operationalization of Free, Prior and Informed Consent procedures are imperative.
10. Faced with the combined social, environmental and climate crisis , Indigenous Peoples are convinced that economic diversity underpins economic viability, biological diversity underpins environmental resilience, cultural diversity underpins social equity, and ethical values sustain social and ecological balance.
11. We need to work harder, together, applying an integrated human rights-based and ecosystem approach.
12. We look to the UNCSD to deepen understanding of these imperatives, and look forward to UNCSD17, moving strongly in this direction.

Thank you very much for your attention.