

**Indigenous Peoples' statement for the major group stakeholder dialogue
intervention session, Tuesday 12th May 2009**

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Today, indigenous peoples reach out to world leaders to work with us in the transition towards sustainable development. We are not peoples of the past, but your partners in addressing contemporary crises. The historic adoption by the General Assembly of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, signals the political will to work for reconciliation, human rights and sustainable development for all peoples.

Land rights are crucial in ensuring the survival of Indigenous Peoples around the world. Land tenure systems, land laws and agrarian policies in many countries need to be reformed towards security of tenure and land rights for indigenous and local communities

The impact of agricultural modernization can be dramatic as seen in many new economic activities on Indigenous Peoples lands. To minimize conflicts on these lands, it is important to ensure full and effective community participation in policy formulation and implementation. Livelihoods can be sustained if policies guiding the exploitation and use of land and natural resources address the dual challenges of resource conservation and poverty reduction.

Indigenous Peoples put forward the following policy recommendations:

- Recognize the substantial contributions of indigenous peoples' natural resource management and their efforts in climate change mitigation and adaptation; and support community-based practices and adaptive strategies as invaluable responses to food security, food sovereignty and climate change
- Adopt policies that value the importance of drylands in economic, ecological, social, cultural and political terms, and promote traditional knowledge, innovations and practices and recognize traditional

livelihoods, customary management of natural resources and other rights of livestock keepers and pastoralists.

- It is an important priority to introduce participatory mechanisms and measures that can integrate infrastructure and market development, and promote technological choices by Pastoralists and farmers to facilitate innovations, such as livestock products, that can make change at the local level.
- Rural development is an area which most of our governments especially those from Africa have ignored for years. Most of the Indigenous Peoples live in those remote rural areas. Marginalization of these areas has seriously impacted these communities. The most able have migrated to urban towns, leaving the heavy workload to women, making women and children more desperate and vulnerable.

It is important therefore, to ensure that action is taken now. Policy priorities have to be inclusive, action oriented and participatory. And they must address the many social, cultural and economic constraints faced by Indigenous Peoples and other local communities globally.