

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' STATEMENT FOR THE MAJOR GROUP
INTERVENTION SESSION, DESERTIFICATION
THURSDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2009**

IPM Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
February 23-27, 2009, United Nations, New York, New York

Globally, desertification has greater impact in Africa. This is mainly because of the large presence of the dry ecosystem. In these lands live the Nomadic Pastoralist, hunter gatherers and other local communities who heavily depend on natural resources for subsistence. Degradation of these lands pushes the populations who are already economically disadvantaged further into poverty. As the effects of desertification are felt further, communities are pushed to the margin and after losing their property, they move from their lands causing further problems. They then lose their traditional lands and livelihoods and environmental mitigation often leads to conflict over land resources like water, grazing gathering and hunting areas. Policy decisions must be done through collaboration with the indigenous peoples and other communities who live in those lands. They have the expertise in coping mechanisms and should be consulted. Environmental scientists must also be more active in promoting their findings and become more involved in policy making. This is mainly because the scientific knowledge many at times exists but there lacks adequate dissemination or use to shape policy. Further Indigenous peoples recommend the need to:

1. Develop and implement drought mitigation strategies that identify the most vulnerable, determine the reasons for their vulnerability, prioritize factors that can be addressed in the short-, medium- and long-term, and integrate action into the broader development agenda.
2. Adopt a comprehensive land use involving carefully planned crop rotation that minimizes erosion and uses less water-dependent crops in drier months/years, conservation agriculture, rainwater harvesting, water recycling, appropriate water restrictions, as presented by the FAO presenter.
3. Provide support for the development and installation of simple local technologies such as those promoting shallow wells, subsurface dams, water harvesting techniques, for the access of water for domestic consumption and hygiene, and for economic activities such as cattle raising, brick making or small-scale agricultural activities.
4. Alternative livelihoods that do not depend on traditional land use are less demanding in respect of local land and natural resource use and can provide sustainable income. There is need to formulate policies that will support capacity building for communities to learn on the alternative livelihoods and any technologies involved. (NCCD, G77 and China and EU recommendations
5. Governments then should adopt policies that value the importance of dry lands in economic, environmental, social, cultural and political terms, and respect for the tenure rights and other rights of livestock keepers and pastoralists.
6. Policy formulation should recognise and promote traditional/indigenous knowledge in combating desertification. Further there is need to ensure that new innovations and technologies incorporate the people's knowledge and ensure information communication and awareness is created to indigenous and local communities right upto the village levels.

7. As the FAO presenter has explained the very importance of livestock keepers, it is then important to support traditional knowledge, innovations and improvement of production systems adapted to climate stress such as pastoralism
8. Increase collaboration between all actors involved in development projects in dry lands and rangelands combined with increased investments.
9. Implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as the main international instrument to address land degradation, drought and desertification and the new ten-year strategic plan of the UNCCD, in collaboration with other UN mechanisms on environment linkages with all conventions is important for the protection of our resources and sustainable development

Thank you Madam Chair.

Presented for Indigenous Peoples major group by Lucy Mullenkei- Indigenous Information Network