

CSD 18th Session, 07 May 2010

Intervention of Indigenous Peoples on the Cross Cutting Issues

Thank you Mr. Chair. For the indigenous peoples, the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was a historical milestone. However, States have different responses in proceeding to incorporate the Declaration into national law, policies and programmes. It is therefore hoped that frameworks, as well as, the development of policies and programmes on sustainable consumption and production, on transportation, chemicals, waste management, and mining will take the Declaration into account.

As reported by the 9th session of UN Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues, "the concepts of indigenous peoples in respect of development with culture and identity are characterized by a holistic approach that seeks to build on collective rights, security and greater control and self-governance of lands, territories and resources. The concepts build on tradition, with respect for ancestors, but are also forward-looking; based on a restorative philosophy underpinned by values of reciprocity, solidarity, equilibrium, sustainability and collectivity".

The escalating problems of food security, conflict and lack of opportunities predispose indigenous peoples, especially women and children, wherein the problem of food and nutrition for the family has increasingly beset women as food and water resources disappear and agricultural lands become unproductive.

While there are claims to significantly establish management systems and policy frameworks to comply with global standards and to improve reporting, social responsibility and the promotion of sustainable development, the Governments and industries has yet to match their pronouncements with sufficient action on the ground. For example, indigenous communities in many parts of the world still await the rehabilitation and environmental clean-up of abandoned mining camps as promised by companies during the heyday of their operations and profits. Alternative fuels, designed to replace fossil fuels in supposedly adapting and mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change, have also been widely challenged by indigenous peoples and farmers because they compete with the traditional use of land and resources, and have caused the violation of indigenous peoples' rights, and have caused more environmental problems.

Efforts towards sustainable development are under increasing threat from so-called "greenwash" and unsustainable practices disguised in words denoting sustainability. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation is an action plan, and the Commission on Sustainable Development needs to develop the capacity to assess actions or the lack of them. Sustainable development within the CSD process is also dependent upon upholding a balance of standards, as laid down in various United Nations obligations on environmental rights, human rights and social justice. The capacity of trusted independent mechanisms to monitor and report on action and implementation needs to be created and strengthened.

There should be greater involvement of indigenous peoples in all discussions and decisions pertaining to international agreements and conventions that address issues of biological diversity and climate change in the context of sustainable development. This would advance and more effectively enforce higher standards of environmental protection, including the banning of harmful chemicals and toxic wastes; and of destructive extractive practices within the various ecosystems.

Thank you, Mr Chair.